

PICTURES
OF SOCIETY
AND PEOPLE OF MARK
BY N. Parker Willis



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PICTURES OF SOCIETY

AND

PEOPLE OF MARK.

DRAWN UNDER A THIN VEIL OF FICTION,

BY

N. PARKER WILLIS,

Author of "Pencillings by the Way," etc.



LONDON:

WARD, LOCK, AND TYLER, WARWICK HOUSE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

[c. 1871]

PICTURES OF SOCIETY

PEOPLE OF MARK

BY MARK TWAIN

A. T. WARD

LONDON

1891

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

REAL life is not as commonplace as it is represented. The contrasts, surprises, combinations, and novel situations, which some say "are only found in plays," occur in every-day society; with the difference, that those in a play, are published to the world, while those in private life, are known only to one or two. The dread of misrepresentation conceals from us most of the machinery of life, and all of its most wonderful occurrences, except now and then one that is disclosed by accident. He who fancies that he sees all that is dramatic, even in the circle where he is most intimate, is like a deaf and blind man, unconsciously present at a play.

There is, of course, great difference in the power of observation; some men seeing less than seems natural, and others more than would be thought possible; but the most common observer has only to allow every other man to know as many surprising things as himself, (which few would, at first thought, allow,) and he will easily understand how the sum total fills the world with invisible dramas. Little we know what the heart is busy with, while the lips are phrasing for us the small talk of the day! Little we dream what we interrupt or further, precede or follow, help to forget, or while away the time for. Few are only about what they seem to be about, or are only what they seem to be.

The freedom to draw truly, in fiction, gives a fidelity to portraiture in a story, which would be almost impossible even in a literal biography. The most common man's exact and entire impression of any one whom he knows, would read like a passage of Shakspeare; because Shakspeare's power of description consists, not in the colouring of his imagination, but in his utter fidelity to nature. Between what we have seen ourselves, and the same thing verbally described to us by others, there is often little or no resemblance, because,

from various influences which do not affect a professedly fictitious description, the describer wavers from the truth.

It is not from his imagination, as is commonly supposed, but from his store of private observation and knowledge, that the author draws his most effective pictures of character and human event. The names may be fictitious, the scenery and circumstances ideal, the personages painted from fancy, but the *motive* of the story is true; the mainspring of feeling which it develops, was a mystery, that could not otherwise be told; the lesson that the author teaches in words to many, was first taught by actual occurrences to himself. No one who is conversant with authors, for instance, could doubt, that in Bulwer's novels, under merely such disguises as make identification impossible, are embodied all his own experiences of feeling, and all that he has learned, of human vicissitude and conduct, by access to the inner life of those about him. Does any one suppose that there is one, among the women he has loved, who cannot find, in his books, the picture of herself; of her heart as he read it; and the record, in truth's most accurate light and shade, of all that was worth remembering between them?

It is in the memory of authors alone, that these vivid and best lessons, in the knowledge of human nature, the lessons of experience and personal observation, are sown, not buried. The exhibition of character contained in the under-currents of life; in an undisclosed conflict, trial, temptation, affection, or passion, is, when stripped of its names and circumstances, no more recognizable than the particular tree by its seed.

The author plants it in another soil, reproduces it in another shape, and with other leaves and branches; and, though the new story has all the essential qualities of the pang or pleasure from which it is drawn, its origin is untraceable. It is one of the rewards of the over-envied and under-paid profession of literature, that the world is led unaware through the author's heart, and sympathizes with all that has moved him. To the hidden qualities he has found and loved, he brings thousands, to add their homage also. For a fine action that could not otherwise be told, for a generous self-sacrifice made in secret, for pangs and trials unconfessed, for all the deep drama of private life, played discouragingly to the appreciation of the few and un-applauding, he can secure a tribute, which the actors alone identify; though its applause, of the

heart unnamed, is as universal, as it is unprofaning and grateful.

There is more or less of truth, the author of the following pages may, perhaps, as well say, in all the stories he has written. In a world sown so thickly with surprises and exceptions to general rules, one has little need to draw on his imagination for a theme. Having suffered, however, from erroneous applications of some of these descriptions to individuals, he takes this opportunity to state, that *by character alone*, (which has been an open field to writers since writing began,) and *not by true circumstances, names, or histories of private life*, is any portion of the ridicule or censure in this volume, applicable or traceable. The greater number of its stories embody such passages, in the personal history of the eminent men and women of Europe, as the author came to the knowledge of, by conversance with the circles in which they moved; portions of the *inner* life which is seen so imperfectly by observers *from without*; lights and shadows, which in their life-time, at least, could not be used for their *individual* biography, but which are invaluable as aids to the *general* portraiture of genius. In revealing thus what has impressed and interested him, the author has the pleasure, of course, of so far sharing his secrets with the reader; but the reader will remember, that, like the visitor to the robber's cave, in the Eastern story, he is brought in, and taken out, blindfold; and, of what he has seen, he can reveal nothing.

N. P. WILLIS.

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A REVELATION OF A PREVIOUS LIFE.

" Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.
The soul that rises in us, our life's star,
Has had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar."—WORDSWORTH.

THE death of a lady, in a foreign land, leaves me at liberty to narrate the circumstances which follow.

A few words of previous explanation, however.

I am inclined to believe, from conversations on the subject with many sensible persons, that there are few men who have not had, at different intervals in their lives, sudden emotions, currents of thought, affections of mind and body, which not only were wholly disconnected with the course of life thus interrupted, but seemed to belong to a wholly different being.

Perhaps I shall somewhere touch the reader's experience by describing rather minutely, and in the first person, some sensations of this kind not unusual to myself.

Walking in a crowded street, for example, in perfect health, with every faculty gaily alive, I suddenly lose the sense of neighbourhood. I see—I hear—but I feel as if I had become invisible where I stand, and were, at the same time, present and visible elsewhere. I know everything that passes around me, but I seem disconnected and (magnetically speaking) unlinked from the human beings near. If spoken to at such a moment, I answer with difficulty. The person who speaks seems addressing me from a world to which I no longer belong. At the same time, I have an irresistible inner consciousness of being present in another scene of every-day life—where there are streets, and houses, and people—where I am looked on without surprise as a familiar object—where I have cares, fears, objects to attain—a different scene altogether, and a different life, from the scene and life of which I was a moment before conscious. I have a dull ache at the back of my eyes for the minute or two that this trance lasts, and then, slowly and reluctantly, my absent soul seems creeping back, the magnetic links of conscious neighbourhood, one by one, re-attach, and I resume my ordinary life, but with an irrepressible feeling of sadness.

It is in vain that I try to fix these shadows as they recede. I have struggled a thousand times, in vain, to particularize and note down what I saw in the strange city to which I was

translated. The memory glides from my grasp with preternatural evasiveness.

In a book called "The Man of Two Lives," similar sensations to these are made the basis of the story. Indeed, till I saw that book, the fear of having my sanity suspected sealed my lips on the subject.

I have still a reserve in my confession. I have been conscious, since boyhood, of a mental peculiarity which I fear to name while I doubt that it is possessed by others than myself—which I should not allude to now, but that forms a strange link of identity between me and another being to be mentioned in this story.

I may say, also, without attaching any importance to it, except as it bears upon this same identity, that, of those things which I have no occasion to be taught, or which I did, as the common phrase is, by intuition, drawing was the easiest and most passionately followed of my boyish pursuits.

With these preliminaries, and probably some similar experience of his own, the reader may happily form a woof on which to embroider the following circumstances.

Travelling through Styria, some years since, I chanced to have for a fellow-occupant of the coupé of a diligence a very courteous and well-bred person, a gentleman of Gratz. As we rolled slowly along, on the banks of the Meur, approaching his native town, he very kindly invited me to remain with him a day or two, offering me, as an inducement, a presentation at the *soirée* of a certain lady of consequence, who was to receive, on the night of our arrival and at whose house I should see, some fair specimens of the beauty of Styria.

Accepted.

It was a lovely summer's night when we strolled through the principal street towards our gay destination, and, as I drew upon my friend's arm to stop him while the military band of the fortress finished a delicious waltz (they were playing in the public square), he pointed out to me the spacious balconies of the countess's palace, whither we were going, crowded with the well-dressed company listening silently to the same enchanting music. We entered, and, after an interchange of compliments with the hostess, I availed myself of my friend's second introduction to take a stand in one of the balconies, beside the person I was presented to, and under cover of her favour, to hear out the unfinished music of the band.

As the evening darkened, the lights gleamed out from the illuminated rooms more brightly, and most of the guests deserted the balconies and joined the gayer circles within. The music ceased at the beat of the drum. My companion in the balcony was a very quiet young lady, and, like myself, she seemed subdued by the sweet harmonies we had listened to, and willing to remain without the shadow of the curtain. We were not alone there, however. A tall lady, of very stately presence, and with the remains of remarkable beauty, stood on the opposite side of the balcony, and she, too, seemed to shrink from the glare within, and cling to the dewy darkness of the summer night.

After the cessation of the music there was no longer an excuse for intermittent conversation, and, starting a subject which afforded rather freer scope, I did my best to credit my friend's flattering introduction. I had discoursed away for half an hour very unreservedly, before I discovered that, with her hand upon her side, in an attitude of repressed emotion, the tall lady was earnestly listening to me. A third person embarrasses even the most indifferent dialogue. The conversation languished, and my companion rose and took my arm for a promenade through the rooms.

Later in the evening my friend came in search of me to the supper-room.

"*Mon ami !*" he said, "a great honour has fallen out of the sky for you. I am sent to bring you to the *beau reste* of the handsomest woman of Styria—Margaret, Baroness R——, whose château I pointed out to you in the gold light of yesterday's sunset. She wishes to know you—*why* I cannot wholly divine—for it is the first sign of ordinary feeling that she has given in twenty years. But she seems agitated, and sits alone in the countess's boudoir. *Allons-y !*"

As we made our way through the crowd he hastily sketched me an outline of the lady's history: "At seventeen, taken from a convent for a forced marriage with the baron whose name she bears; at eighteen a widow, and, for the first time, in love—the subject of her passion a young artist of Vienna on his way to Italy. The artist died at her château—they were to have been married—she has ever since worn weeds for him. And the remainder you must imagine—for here we are!"

The baroness leaned with her elbow upon a small table of

or *molu*, and her position was so taken that I seated myself necessarily in a strong light, while her features were in shadow. Still, the light was sufficient to show me the expression of her countenance. She was a woman apparently about forty-five, of noble physiognomy, and a peculiar fulness of the eyelid—something like to which, I thought I remembered to have seen, in a portrait of a young girl, many years before. The resemblance troubled me somewhat.

"You will pardon me this freedom," said the baroness with forced composure, "when I tell you that—a friend—whom I have mourned twenty-five years—seems present to me when you speak."

I was silent, for I knew not what to say. The baroness shaded her eyes with her hand, and sat silent for a few moments, gazing at me.

"You are not like him in a single feature," she resumed, "yet the expression of your face, strangely, very strangely, is the same. He was darker—slighter"—

"Of my age?" I inquired, to break my own silence. For there was something in her voice which gave me the sensation of a voice heard in a dream.

"Oh, God! that voice! that voice!" she exclaimed wildly, burying her face in her hands, and giving way to a passionate burst of tears.

"Rodolph," she resumed, recovering herself with a strong effort, "Rodolph died with the promise on his lips that death should not divide us. And I have seen him! Not in dreams—not in reverie—not at times when my fancy could delude me. I have seen him suddenly before me in the street—in Vienna—here—at home at noonday—for minutes together, gazing on me. It is more in latter years that I have been visited by him; and a hope has latterly sprung into being in my heart—I know not how—that in person, palpable, and breathing, I should again hold converse with him—fold him living to my bosom. Pardon me! You will think me mad!

I might well pardon her; for, as she talked, a vague sense of familiarity with her voice, a memory, powerful, though indistinct, of having before dwelt on those majestic features, an impulse of tearful passionateness to rush to her embrace, well nigh overpowered me. She turned to me again.

"You are an artist?" she said, inquiringly.

"No; though intended for one, I believe, by nature."

"And you were born in the year ——."

"I was!"

With a scream she added the day of my birth, and waiting an instant for my assent, dropped to the floor, and clung convulsively and weeping to my knees.

"Rodolph! Rodolph!" she murmured faintly, as her long grey tresses fell over her shoulders, and her head dropped insensible upon her breast.

Her cry had been heard, and several persons entered the room. I rushed out of doors. I had need to be in darkness and alone.

It was an hour after midnight when I re-entered my hotel. A chasseur stood sentry at the door of my apartment with a letter in his hand. He called me by name, gave me his missive, and disappeared. It was from the baroness, and ran thus:

"You did not retire from me to sleep. This letter will find you waking. And I must write, for my heart and brain are overflowing.

"Shall I write to you as a stranger?—you whom I have strained so often to my bosom—you whom I have loved and still love with the utmost idolatry of mortal passion—you who have once given me the soul that, like a gem long lost, is found again, but in a newer casket! Mine still—for did we not swear to love for ever!

"But I am taking counsel of my own heart only. You may still be unconvinced. You may think that a few singular coincidences have driven me mad. You may think that, though born in the same hour that my Rodolph died, possessing the same voice, the same countenance, the same gifts—though by irresistible consciousness I *know* you to be *him*—my lost lover returned in another body to life—you may still think the evidence incomplete—you may, perhaps, even now, be smiling in pity at my delusion. Indulge me one moment.

"The Rodolph Isenberg whom I lost, possessed a faculty of mind, which, if you are he, answers with the voice of an angel to my appeal. In that soul resided, and wherever it be, must *now* reside, the singular power" * * *

(The reader must be content with my omission of this fragment of the letter. It contained a secret never before clothed in language—a secret that will die with me, unless

betrayed by what indeed it may lead to—madness! As I saw it in writing—defined accurately and inevitably in the words of another—I felt as if the innermost chamber of my soul was suddenly laid open to the day—I abandoned doubt—I answered to the name by which she called me—I believed in the previous existence of which my whole life, no less than these extraordinary circumstances, had furnished me with repeated evidence. But, to resume the letter.)

“And now that we know each other again—now that I can call you by name, as in the past, and be sure that your inmost consciousness must reply—a new terror seizes me! Your soul comes back, youthfully and newly clad, while mine, though of unfading freshness and youthfulness within, shows to your eye the same outer garment, grown dull with mourning and faded with the wear of time. Am I grown distasteful? Is it with the sight only of this new body that you look upon me? Rodolph!—spirit that was my devoted and passionate admirer! soul that was sworn to me for ever!—am I—the same Margaret, refound and recognised, grown repulsive? Oh God? What a bitter answer would this be to my prayers for your return to me!

“I will trust in Him whose benign goodness smiles upon fidelity in love. I will prepare a fitter meeting for two who parted as lovers. You shall not see me again in the house of a stranger and in a mourning attire. When this letter is written, I will depart at once for the scene of our love. I hear my horses already in the court-yard, and while you read this I am speeding swiftly home. The bridal dress you were secretly shown, the day before death came between us, is still freshly kept. The room where we sat—the bowers by the streams—the walks where we projected our sweet promise of a future—they shall all be made ready. They shall be as they were! And I—oh Rodolph, I shall be the same! My heart is not grown old, Rodolph! Believe me, I am unchanged in soul! And I will strive to be—I will strive to look—God help me to look and be—as of yore!

“Farewell now! I leave horses and servants to wait on you till I send to bring you to me. Alas, for my delay! but we will pass this life and all other time together. We have seen that a vow of eternal union may be kept—that death can not divide those who *will* to love for ever! Farewell now!

“MARGARET.”

Circumstances compelled me to read this letter with but one feeling—exquisite pain! Love lasts till death, but it is mortal! The affections, however intense and faithful (I now know), are part of the perishable coil, forgotten in the grave. With the memory of this love of another life, haunting me through my youth, and keeping its vow of visitation, I had given the whole heart of my second youth to another. Affianced to her, waited for by her, bound to her by vows which death had not divided, I had but one course to pursue. I left Gratz in an hour, never to return.

A few days since I was walking alone in the crowded thoroughfare of the city where I live. Suddenly my sense of presence there fell off me. I walked on, but my inward sight absorbed all my consciousness. A room which was familiar to me shut me in, and a bed hung in mourning became apparent. In another instant a figure laid out in a winding-sheet, and partially covered with a velvet pall, grew distinct through the dimness, and in the low-laid head I recognised, what a presentiment had already betrayed to me, the features of Margaret, Baroness R——. It will be still months before I can see the announcement of her death. But she is dead!

THE PHANTOM-HEAD UPON THE TABLE.

CHAPTER I.—SHOWING THE HUMILIATION OF THE BARRIERS OF HIGH LIFE.

THERE is no aristocracy in the time o'night. It was punctually ten o'clock, in Berkeley square. It rained on the nobleman's roof. It rained on the beggar's head. The lamps, for all that was visible except themselves, might have well have been half way to the moon, but even that was not particular to Berkeley square.

A hack cabriolet groped in from Bruton street.

"Shall I ring any bell for you, sir?" said the cabmen, pulling aside the wet leather curtain.

"No! I'll get out anywhere! Pull up to the side-walk!" But the passenger's mind changed, while paying his shilling.

"On second thoughts, my good fellow, you may knock at the large door on the right."

The driver scrambled up the high steps and gave a single knock—such a knock as the drivers of only the poor and unfashionable are expected to give, in well-regulated England.

The door was opened only to a crack, and a glittering livery peered through. But the passenger was close behind, and setting his foot against the door, he drove back the suspicious menial and walked in. Three men, powdered and emblazoned in blue and gold, started to their feet, and came toward the apparent intruder. He took the wet cap from his head, deliberately flung his well-worn cloak into the arms of the nearest man, and beckoning to another, pointed to his overshoes. With a suppressed titter, two of the footmen disappeared through a side-door, and the third, mumbling something about sending up one of the stable-boys, turned to follow them.

The new-comer's hand passed suddenly into the footman's white cravat, and, by a powerful and sudden throw, the man was brought to his knee.

"Oblige me by unbuckling that shoe!" said the stranger, in a tone of imperturbable coolness, setting his foot upon the upright knee of the astonished menial.

The shoe was taken off, and the other set in its place upon the plush-covered leg, and unbuckled, as obediently.

"Keep them until I call you to put them on again!" said the wearer, taking his gloves from his pockets, as the man arose, and slowly walking up and down the hall while he drew them leisurely on.

From the wet and muddy overshoes had been delivered two slight and well-appointed feet, however, shining in pliable and unexceptionable jet. With a second look, and the foul-weather togger laid aside, the humbled footman saw that he had been in error, and that, hack-cab and dirty overshoes to the contrary notwithstanding, the economising guest of "my lord!" would appear, on the other side of the drawing-room door, only at home on "velvet of three pile"—an elegant of undepreciable water!

"Shall I announce you, sir?" respectfully inquired the servant.

"If Lord Aymar has come up from the dinner table—yes! if the ladies are alone—no!"

"Coffee has just gone in to the ladies, sir!"

"Then I'll find my own way!"

Lady Aymar was jamming the projecting diamond of a bracelet through and through the thick white leaf of an Egyptian kala, lost apparently in an eclipse of reverie—possibly in a swoon of slumberous digestion. By the drawing-room light, in her negligent posture, she looked of a ripeness of beauty not yet sapped by one autumnal minute—plump, drowsy, and voluptuous. She looked up as the door opened.

"Spiridion!"

"Sappho!"

"Don't be silly!—how are you, Count Pallardos? And how like a ghost you come in, unannounced! Suppose I had been tying my shoe, or anything?"

"Is your ladyship quite well?"

"I will take coffee and wake up to tell you! Was I asleep when you opened the door? They were all so dull at dinner. Ah me! stupid or agreeable, we grow old all the same! How am I looking, Spiridion?"

"Ravishingly! Where is lady Angelica?"

"Give me another lump of sugar! La! don't *you* take coffee!"

"There are but two cups, and this was meant for a lip of more celestial earth—has she been gone long?"

The door opened, and the rustling dress of Lady Angelica Aymar made music in the room. Oh, how gloriously beautiful she was, and how changed was Count Spiridion Pallardos by her coming in! A minute before, so inconsequent, so careless and complimentary—now so timid, so deferential, so almost awkward in every motion!

The name of "Greek count" has been for a long time, in Europe, the synonym for "adventurer"—a worse pendant to a man's name, in high life at least, than "pirate" or "robber." Not that a man is peculiar who is trying to make the most out of society, and would prefer an heiress to a governess, but that it is a disgrace to be so labelled! An "adventurer" is the same as any other gentleman who is not rich, only without a mask.

Count Pallardos was lately arrived from Constantinople, and was recognized and received by Lord Aymar as the son of a reduced Greek noble who had been the dragoman to the English embassy when his lordship was ambassador to the Porte. With a promptness a little singular in one whose

patronage was so difficult to secure, Lord Aymar had immediately procured, for the son of his old dependent, a small employment as translator in the Foreign Office, and, with its most limited stipend for his means, the young Count had commenced his experience of English life. His acquaintance with the ladies of Lord Aymar's family was two stages in advance of this, however. Lady Aymar remembered him well as the beautiful child of the lovely Countess Pallardos, the playfellow of her daughter Angelica on the shore of the Bosphorus; and on his first arrival in England, hearing that the family of his patron was on the coast for sea-bathing, Spiridion had prepared to report himself first to the female portion of it. Away from society, in a retired *cottage ornée* upon the seashore, they had received him with no hindrance to their appreciation or hospitality; and he had thus been subjected, by accident, to a month's unshared intoxication with the beauty of the Lady Angelica. The arrival of the young Greek had been made known to Lord Aymar by his lady's letters, and the situation had been procured for him; but Pallardos had seen his lordship but once, and this was his first visit to the town establishment of the family.

The butler came in with a *petit verre* of Curaçoa for Miladi, and was not surprised, as the footman would have been, to see Lady Angelica on her knee, and Count Pallardos imprisoning a japonica in the *knot à la Grècque* of that head of heaven's most heavenly moulding. Brother and sister, Cupid and Psyche, could not have been grouped with a more playful familiarity.

"Spiridion!"—said Lady Aymar—"I shall call you Spiridion till the men come up—how are you lodged, my dear! Have you a bath in your dressing-room?"

"Pitcher and bowl of the purest crockery, my dear lady. May I venture to draw this braid a little closer, Angelica—to correct the line of this raven mass on your cheek? It robs us now of a rose-leaf's breadth at least—flat burglary, my sweet friend!"

But the Lady Angelica sprang to her feet, for a voice was heard of some one ascending from the dining-room. She flung herself into a *dormeuse*, Spiridion twirled his two fingers at the fire, as if bodily warmth was the uppermost necessity of the moment, and enter Lord Aymar, followed by a great statesman, a famous poet, one sprig of unsurpassed nobility, and one wealthy dandy commoner.

Lord Aymar nodded to his *protégé*, but the gentlemen grouped themselves, for a moment, around a silver easel upon which stood a *Correggio*, a late purchase of which his lordship had been discoursing, and, in that minute or two, the name and quality of the stranger were communicated to the party—probably, for they took their coffee without further consciousness of his presence.

The statesman paired off to a corner with his host to talk politics, the poet took the punctured flower from the lap of Lady Aymar, and commenced mending, with patent wax wafers, from the or-molu desk near by, the holes in the white leaves; and the two ineffables lingered a moment longer over their Curaçoa.

Pallardos drew a chair within conversation-reach of Lady Angelica, and commenced an unskilful discussion of the opera of the night before. He felt angry, insulted, unseated from his self-possession, yet he could not have told why. The two young men lounged leisurely across the room, and the careless Lord Frederick drew his chair partly between Pallardos and Lady Angelica, while Mr. Townley Mynners reclined upon an ottoman behind her, and brought his lips within whisper-shot of her ear, and, with ease and unforced nonsense, not audible nor intended to be audible to the "Greek adventurer," they inevitably engrossed the noble beauty.

The blood of Count Spiridion ran round his heart like a snake coiled to strike. He turned to a portfolio of drawings for a cover to self-control and self-communing, for he felt that he had need of summoning his keenest and coldest judgment, his boldest and wariest courage of conduct and endurance, to submit to, and outnerve and overmaster, his humiliating position. He was under a roof of which he well knew that the pride and joy of it, the fair Lady Angelica, the daughter of the proud Earl, had given him her heart. He well knew that he had needed reserve and management to avoid becoming too much the favourite of the lady mistress of that mansion; yet, in it, he had been twice insulted grossly, cuttingly, but in both cases unresentably—once by unpunishable menials, of whom he could not even complain without exposing and degrading himself, and once by the supercilious competitors for the heart he knew was his own—and, they too, unpunishable.

At this moment, at a sign from Lady Aymar, her lord

swung open the door of a conservatory to give the room air, and the long mirror, set in the panel, showed to Spiridion his own pale and lowering features. He thanked heaven for the chance! To see himself once more was what he bitterly needed!—to see whether his head had shrunk between his shoulders—whether his back was crouched—whether his eyes and lips had lost their fearlessness and pride! He had feared so—felt so! He almost wondered that he did not look like a dependent and a slave! But oh, no! The large mirror showed the grouped figures of the drawing-room, his own the noblest among them by nature's undeniable confession! His clear, statuary outline of features—the finely-cut arches of his lips—the bold, calm darkness of his passionate eyes—his graceful and high-born mein,—all apparent enough to his own eye when seen in the contrast of that mirrored picture—he was *not* changed!—*not* a slave—*not* metamorphosed by that hour's humiliation! He clenched his right hand, once, till the nails were driven through his glove into the clammy palm, and then rose with a soft smile on his features, like the remainder of a look of pleasure.

"I have found," said he, in a composed and musical tone, "I have found what we were looking for, Lady Angelica."

He raised the large portfolio from the print-stand, and setting it open on his knee, directly between Lord Frederick and Lady Angelica, cut off that nobleman's communication with her ladyship very effectually, while he pointed out a view of the Acropolis at Athens. Her ladyship was still expressing her admiration of the drawing, when Spiridion turned to the astonished gentleman at her ear.

"Perhaps, sir," said he, "in a lady's service, I may venture to dispossess you of that ottoman. Will you be kind enough to rise?"

With a stare of astonishment, the elegant Mr. Townley Mynners reluctantly complied; and Spiridion, drawing the ottoman in front of Lady Angelica, set the broad portfolio upon it, and seating himself at her feet upon the outer edge, commenced a detailed account of the antiquities of the grand capitol. The lady listened with an amused look of mischief in her eye, Lord Frederick walked once round her chair, humming an air very rudely; Mr. Mynners attempted in vain to call Lady Angelica to look at something wonderful in the conservatory, and Spiridion's triumph was complete. He

laid aside the portfolio after a moment or two, drew the ottoman back to its advantageous position, and, self-assured and at his ease, engrossed fully and agreeably the attention of his heart's mistress.

Half an hour elapsed. Lord Aymar took a kind of dismission attitude before the fire, and the guests one and all took their leave. They were all cloaking together in the entry, when his lordship leaned over the bannister.

"Have you your chariot, Lord Frederick?" he asked.

"Yes—it's at the door now!"

"Lady Aymar suggests that perhaps you'll set down Count Pallardos on your way!"

"Why—ah, certainly, certainly!" replied Lord Frederick, with some hesitation.

"My thanks to Lady Aymar," said Spiridion, very quietly, "but say to her ladyship that I am provided with overshoes and umbrella! Shall I offer your lordship half of the latter?" added he in another key, leaning with cool mock-earnestness toward Lord Frederick, who only stared a reply as he passed out to his chariot.

And marvelling who would undergo such humiliations and such antagonism as had been his lot that evening, for anything else than the love of a Lady Angelica, Count Spiridion stepped forth into the rain to grope his way to his obscure lodgings in Parliament Street.

CHAPTER. I—SHEWING A GENTLEMAN'S NEED OF A HORSE.

It was the hour when the sun in heaven is supposed to be least promiscuous—the hour when the five hundred fashionables of London West-End receive his visit in the open air, to to the entire exclusion (it is presumed) of the remaining population of the globe. The cabs and jarveys, the vehicles of the despised public, rolled past the forbidden gate of Hyde-park, and the echo stationed in the arched portal announced the coronetted carriages as they nicely nibbled the pleased gravel in passing under. A plebeian or two stood outside to get a look at the superior beings whose daily list of company to dine is the news most carefully furnished to the instructed public. The birds (having "fine feathers") flew over the iron railing, unchallenged by the gatekeeper. Four o'clock went up to

Heaven's gate with the souls of those who had died since three, and with the hour's report of the world's sins and good deeds; and, at the same moment, a chariot rolled into the park, holding between its claret panels the embellished flesh and blood of Lady Aymer and her incomparable daughter.

A group of gay men on horseback stood at the bend of "Rotten Row," watching the comers-in; and within the inner railing of the park, among the promenaders on foot, was distinguishable the slight figure of Count Pallardos, pacing to and fro with step somewhat irregular. As Lady Aymer's chariot went by, he bowed with a frank and ready smile, but the smile was quickly banished by a flushed cheek and lowering brow, for, from the group of mounted dandies, dashed out Lord Frederick Beauchief, upon a horse of unparalleled beauty, and with a short gallop, took and kept his place close at the chariot window.

Pallardos watched them till the turn of the ring took them from his sight. The fitness of the group—the evident suitability of Lord Frederick's position at that chariot window, filled him with a jealousy he could no longer stifle. The contest was all unequal, it was too palpable to deny. He, himself, whatever his person or qualities, was, when on foot, in the place allotted to him by his fortunes—not only unnoticed by the contagious admiration of the crowd, but unable even to obey his mistress, though beckoned by her smile to follow her! That superb animal, the very type of pride and beauty, arching his glossy neck and tossing his spirited head before the eyes of Lady Angelica, was one of those unanalyzed, undisputed vouchers for the owner's superiority, which make wealth the devil's gift—irresistible but by the penetrating and cold judgment of superior beings. How should a woman, born with the susceptible weaknesses of her sex, most impressible by that which is most showy and beautiful—how should she be expected to reason coldly and with philosophic discrimination on this subject?—how separate from Lord Frederick, the mere man, his subservient accompaniments of wealth, attendance, homage from others, and infatuated presumption in himself? Nay—what presumption in Spiridion Pallardos (so he felt, with his teeth set together in despair, as he walked rapidly along)—to suppose that he could contend successfully against this and a thousand such advantages and opportunities, with only his unpriced, unproved love to offer her with a hand

of poverty! His heart ran drowningly over with the bitterness of conviction.

After a few steps, Pallardos turned back with an instinctive though inexplicable desire to hasten the pang of once more meeting them as they came round the ring of the park. Coming toward him, was one of the honourable officials of Downing Street, with whom he had been thrown in contact, a conceited and well-born diner-out, mounted on a handsome cob, but with his servant behind him on a blood-hunter. Mr. Dallinger was walking his horse slowly along the fence, and, as he came opposite Pallardos, he drew rein.

"Count!" said he, in that patronizing tone which is tossed over the head of the patronized like a swan's neck over the worm about to be gobbled, "a—a—a—do you know Spanish?"

"Yes. Why?"

"A—a—I've a job for you! You know Moreno, the Spanish secretary—well, his wife—she *will* persist in disguising her billets-doux in that stilted language, and—you know what I want—suppose you come and breakfast with me to-morrow morning?"

Pallardos was mentally crowding his contemptuous refusal into the smallest phrase that could convey repulse to insolence, when the high-stepping and foam-spattered forelegs of Lady Aymar's bays appeared under the drooping branch of the tree beyond him. The next instant, Lord Frederick's easily-carried head danced into sight—a smile of perfect self-satisfaction on his face, and his magnificent horse, excited by the constant check, prancing at his proudest. At the moment they passed, Dallinger's groom, attempted to restrain the impatience of the spirited hunter he was upon, drew the curb a little too violently, and the man was thrown. The sight of the empty saddle sent a thought through the brain of Pallardos like a shaft.

"May I take a little of the nonsense out of that horse for you?" said he, quickly springing over the railing, and seizing the rein, to which the man still held, while the affrighted horse backed and reared towards his master.

"A—a—yes, if you like!"

Pallardos sprang into the saddle, loosened the rein and leaned forward, and, with three or four powerful bounds, the horse was at the other window of the chariot. Away, with the bursted trammels of heart and brain, went all thoughts of

the horse's owner, and all design, if any had flashed on his mind, of time or place for restoring him. Bred in a half-civilized country, where the bold hand was often paramount to law, the Greek had no habit of mind likely to recognise, in a moment of passion, even stronger barriers of propriety than he was now violating; and, to control his countenance and his tongue, and summon his resources for an apparently careless and smiling contest of attraction with his untroubled rival, was work enough for the whole mind and memory, as well as for the nerve and spirit of the excited Greek. He laid his hand on the chariot window, and thinking no more of the horse he was subduing than the air he breathed, broke up his powerful gallop to a place that suited him, and played the lover to the best of his coolness and ability.

"We saw you walking just now, and were lamenting that you were not on horseback," said Lady Aymar, "for it is a sweet evening, and we thought of driving out for a stroll in old Sir John Chasteney's grounds at Bayswater. Will you come, Spiridion? Tell White to drive there!"

Lord Frederick kept his place, and, with its double escort, the equipage of the Aymars sped on its way to Bayswater. Spiridion was the handsomer man, and the more graceful rider, and, without forcing the difficult part of keeping up a conversation with those within the chariot, he soon found his uneasiness displaced by a glow of hope and happiness; for Lady Angelica, leaning far back in her seat, and completely hidden from Lord Frederick, kept her eyes watchfully and steadily upon the opposite side, where rode her less confident lover. The evening was of summer's softest and richest glory, breezy and fragrant; and as the sun grew golden, the party alighted at the gates of Chasteney park—in tune for love, it must needs be, if ever conspiring smiles in nature could compel accord in human affections.

Ah, happy Spiridion Pallardos! The Lady Angelica called him to disengage her dress from the step of the carriage, and her arm was in his when he arose; placed there as confidingly as a bride's, and with a gentle pressure that was half love and half mischief—for she quite comprehended that Lord Frederick's ride to Bayswater was *not* for the pleasure of a twilight stroll through Chasteney park with her mother! That mother, fortunately, was no *duenna*. She had pretensions of her own to admiration, and she was only particular

as to the quantity. Her daughter's division with her of the homage of their male acquaintances, was an evil she indolently submitted to, but she was pleased in proportion as it was not obtruded upon her notice. As Pallardos and the Lady Angelica turned into one of the winding alleys of the grounds, Lady Aymar bent her large eyes very fixedly upon another, and where such beautiful eyes went before, her small feet were very sure to follow. The twilight threw its first blur over the embowering foliage as the parties lost sight of each other, and, of the pair who are the hero and heroine of this story, it can only be disclosed that they found a haven (embalmed, for their particular use, in the golden dusk of that evening's twilight), and returned to the park gate in the latest minute before dark, sworn lovers, let come what would. But meantime, the happy man's horse had disappeared, as well he might have been expected to do, his bridle having been thrown over a bush by the engrossed Pallardos, when called upon to assist Lady Angelica from her carriage, and milord's groom and miladi's footman having no *sovereign* reasons for securing him. Lord Frederick laughed till the Count accepted the offer of Lady Aymar to take him home, bodkin-wise, between herself and her daughter; and for the happiness of being close pressed to the loving side of the Lady Angelica for one hour more, Pallardos would willingly have lost a thousand horses—his own or the Honorable Mr. Dallinger's. And, by the way, of Mr. Dallinger, and his wrath, and his horseless groom, Spiridion began now to have a thought or two of an uncomfortable pertinacity of intrusion.

CHAPTER III.—SHOWING WHAT MAKES A HORSE-STEALER
A GENTLEMEN.

It was the first day of September, and most of the gold threads were drawn from the tangled and vari-colored woof of London society. "The season" was over. Two gentlemen stood in the window of Crockford's, one a Jew barrister (kersey enough for more russet company by birth and character, but admitted to the society of "costly stuff" for the equivalent he gave as a purveyor of scandal), and the other a commoner, whose wealth and fashion gave him the privilege of outstaying the season in town, without publishing in the Morning

Post a better reason than inclination for so unnatural a procedure.

Count Spiridion Pallardos was seen to stroll slowly up St. James' street, on the opposite side.

"Look there, Abrams!" said Mr. Townley Mynners, "there's the Greek who was taken up at one time by the Aymars. I thought he was transported."

"No! he still goes to the Aymars, though he is 'in Coventry' everywhere else. Dallinger had him arrested—for horse-stealing, wasn't it? The officer nabbed him as he was handing Lady Angelica out of her carriage in Berkeley square. I remember hearing of it two months ago. What a chop-fallen blackguard it looks!"

"Blackguard! Come, come, man!—give the devil his due!" deprecated the more liberal commoner; "may be it's from not having seen a gentleman for the last week, but, hang me if I don't think that same horse-stealer turning the corner is as crack-looking a man as I ever saw from this window. What's o'clock?"

"Half-past four," replied the scandal-monger, swallowing, with a bland smile, *what there was to swallow* in Mynner's two-edged remark, and turning suddenly on his heel.

Pallardos slowly took his way along Piccadilly, and was presently in Berkeley square, at the door of the Aymars. The porter admitted him without question, and he mounted, unannounced, to the drawing-room. The ladies sat by the window, looking out upon the garden.

"Is it you, Spiridion?" said Lady Aymar, "I had hoped you would not come to-day!"

"Oh, mamma!" appealed Lady Angelica.

"Welcome all other days of the year, my dear Pallardos—warmly welcome, of course"—continued Lady Aymar, "but—to-day—oh God! you have no idea what the first of September is—to us—to my husband!"

Lady Aymar covered her face with her hands, and the tears streamed through her fingers.

"Pardon me," said Pallardos, "pardon me my dear lady, but I am here by the earl's invitation, to dine at six."

Lady Aymar sprang from her seat in astonishment.

"By the earl's invitation, did you say? Angelica, what can that mean? Was it by note, Count Pallardos?"

"By note," he replied.

"I am amazed!" she said, "truly amazed! Does he mean to have a confidant for his family secret? Is his insanity on one point affecting his reason on all? What shall we do, Angelica?"

"We may surely confide in Spiridion, whatever the meaning of it, or the result"—gently murmured Lady Angelica.

"We may—we may!" said Lady Aymar. "Prepare him for it as you will. I pray heaven to help me through with it this day without upsetting my reason. I shall meet you at dinner, Spiridion."

With her hands twisted together in a convulsive knot, Lady Aymar slowly and musingly passed into the conservatory, on her way to her own room, leaving to themselves two lovers who had much to talk of beside dwelling upon a mystery which, even to Lady Angelica, who knew most of it, was wholly inexplicable. Yet it was partially explained by the trembling girl—explained as a case of monomania, and with the brevity of a disagreeable subject, but listened to by her lover with a different feeling—a conviction as of a verified dream, and a vague, inexplicable terror which he could neither reason down nor account for. But the lovers must be left to themselves, by the reader as well as by Lady Aymar; and meantime, till the dinner hour, when our story begins again, we may glance at a note which was received, and replied to, by Lord Aymar in the library below.

"MY DEAR LORD,—In the belief that a frank communication would be best under the circumstances, I wish to make an inquiry, prefacing it with the assurance that my only hope of happiness has been for some time staked upon the successful issue of my suit for your daughter's hand. It is commonly understood, I believe, that the bulk of your lordship's fortune is separate from the entail, and may be disposed of at your pleasure. May I inquire its amount, or rather, may I ask what fortune goes with the hand of Lady Angelica. The Beauchief estates are unfortunately much embarrassed, and my own debts (I may frankly confess) are very considerable. You will at once see, my lord, that, in justice to your daughter, as well as to myself, I could not do otherwise than make this frank inquiry before pushing my suit to extremity. Begging your indulgence and an immediate answer, I remain, my dear lord, yours, very faithfully,
"The Earl of Aymar."

"FREDERICK BEAUCHIEF.

(REPLY.)

"DEAR LORD FREDERICK,—I trust you will not accuse me of a want of candour in declining a direct answer to your question. Though I freely own to a friendly wish for your success in your efforts to engage the affections of Lady Angelica, with a view to marriage, it can only be in the irrevocable process of a marriage settlement that her situation, as to the probable disposal of my fortune, can be disclosed. I may admit to you, however, that upon the events of this day on which you have written, (it so chances) may depend the question whether I should encourage you to pursue further your addresses to Lady Angelica.

"Yours very faithfully,

"Lord Frederick Beauchief."

"AYMAR.

It seemed like the first day after a death, in the house of Lord Aymar. An unaccountable hush prevailed through the servant's offices; the grey-headed old butler crept noiselessly about, making his preparations for dinner, and the doors, that were open and shut, betrayed the careful touch of apprehension. With penetrating and glassy clearness, the kitchen clock, seldom heard above stairs, resounded through the house, striking six.

In the same neglected attire which she had worn in the morning, Lady Aymar re-entered the drawing-room. The lids were drawn up around her large eyes with a look of unresisting distress, and she walked with relaxed steps, and had, altogether, an absent air, and seemed full of dread. The interrupted lovers ceased talking as she approached, but she did not remark the silence, and walked, errandless, from corner to corner.

The butler announced dinner.

"May I give your ladyship an arm?" asked Pallardos.

"Oh God! is it dinner-time already!" she exclaimed, with a voice of terror. "Williams! is Lord Aymar below?"

"In the dining-room, miladi."

She took Spiridion's arm, and they descended the stairs. As they approached the dining-room, her arm trembled so violently in his, that he turned to her with the fear that she was about to fall. He did not speak. A vague dread, which was more than he had caught from her looks—a something unaccountably heavy at his own heart—made his voice cling to his throat. He bowed to Lord Aymar.

His noble host stood leaning upon the mantel-piece, pale, but seeming less stern and cold than suffering and nerved to bear pain.

"I am glad to see you, my dear count!" he said, giving him his hand with an affectionateness that he had never before manifested. "Are you quite well?" he added, scrutinizing his features closely with the question—"for, like myself, you seem to have grown pale upon this—September dullness."

"I am commonly less well in this month than in any other," said Pallardos, "and—now I think of it—I had forgotten that I arose this morning with a depression of spirits as singular as it was unendurable. I forgot it, when I received your lordship's note, in the happiness the day was to bring me."

The lovers exchanged looks, unremarked, apparently, by either Lord or Lady Aymar, and the conversation relapsed into the commonplaces of dinner-table civility. Spiridion observed that the footmen were excluded, the old butler alone serving them at table; and that the shutters, of which he got a chance glimpse between the curtains, were carefully closed. Once or twice Pallardos roused himself with the thought that he was ill playing the part of an agreeable guest, and proposed some question that might lead to discussion; but the spirits of Lady Angelica seemed frightened to silence, and Lord and Lady Aymar were wholly absorbed, or were at least unconscious of their singular incommunicativeness.

Dinner dragged on slowly—Lady Aymar retarding every remove with terrified and flurried eagerness. Pallardos remarked that she did not eat, but she asked to be helped again from every dish before its removal. Her fork rattled on the plate with the trembling of her hand, and, once or twice, an outbreak of hysterical tears was evidently prevented by a stern word and look from Lord Aymar.

The butler leaned over to his mistress's ear.

"No—no—no! Not yet—not yet!" she exclaimed, in a hurried voice, "one minute more!" But the clock at that instant struck seven, counted by that table company in breathless silence. Pallardos felt his heart sink, he knew not why.

Lord Aymar spoke quickly and hoarsely.

"Turn the key, Williams."

Lady Aymar screamed and covered her face with her hands.

"Remove the cloth!" he again ordered precipitately.

The butler's hand trembled. He fumbled with the corner

of the cloth a moment, and seemed to want strength or courage to fulfil his office. With a sudden effort, Lord Aymar seized and threw the cloth to the other end of the apartment.

"There!" cried he, starting to his feet, and pointing to the bare table, "there! there!" he repeated, seizing the hand of Lady Angelica, as she arose terrified upon her feet, "See you nothing? Do you see nothing?"

With a look at her father, of blank inquiry—a look of pity at her mother, sunk helpless upon the arm of her chair—a look at Pallardos, who, with open mouth, and eyes starting from their sockets, stood gazing upon the table, heedless of all present—she answered, "Nothing, my dear father!—nothing!"

He flung her arm suddenly from his hand, "I knew it," said he, with angry emphasis. "Take her, shameless woman! Take your child, and begone!"

But Pallardos laid his hand upon the earl's arm,

"My lord! my lord!" he said, in a tone of fearful suppression of outcry, "can we not remove this hideous object? How it glares at you!—at *me*! Why does it look at *me*! What is it, Lord Aymar? What brings that ghastly head *here*? Oh God! oh God! I have seen it so often!"

"*You*?—*you* have seen it?" suddenly asked Lady Aymar, in a whisper. *Is there anything to see?* Do *you* see the same dreadful sight, Spiridion?" Her voice rose, with the last question, to a scream.

Pallardos did not answer. He had forgotten the presence of them all. He struggled a moment, gasping and choking for self-control, and then, with a sudden movement, clutched at the bare table. His empty hand slowly opened, and his strength sufficed to pass his finger across the palm. He staggered back with an idiotic laugh, and was received in his fall by the trembling arms of Lady Angelica. A motion from Lord Aymar conveyed to his faithful servant that the phantom was vanishing! The door was flung open, and the household summoned.

"Count Pallardos has fainted from the heat of the room," said Lord Aymar. "Place him upon my bed! And—Lady Aymar!—will you step into the library—I would speak with you a moment!"

There was humility and beseechingness in the last few words of Lord Aymar, which fell strangely on the ear of the affrighted and guilty woman. Her mind had been too fearfully

tasked to comprehend the meaning of that changed tone, but, with a vague feeling of relief, she staggered through the hall, and the door of the library closed behind her.

CHAPTER IV.

A LETTER from Lord Aymar to Lady Angelica will put the story forward a little :

“MY DEAR ANGELICA,—I am happy to know that there are circumstances which will turn aside much of the poignancy of the communication I am about to make to you. If I am not mistaken, at least, in believing a mutual attachment to exist between yourself and Count Pallardos, you will at once comprehend the ground of my mental relief, and, perhaps, in a measure, anticipate what I am about to say.

“I have never spoken to you of the fearful inheritance in the blood of the Aymars. This would appear a singular omission between two members of one family, but I had strong reasons for my silence, one of which was your possible sympathy with your mother's obstinate incredulity. *Now*—since yesterday's appalling proof—you can no longer doubt the *inheritance of the phantom head*—the fearful record of some nameless deed of guilt, which is doomed to haunt our festal table as often as the murderous day shall come around to a descendant of our blood. Fortunately—mercifully I shall perhaps say—we are not visited by this dread avenger, till the maturity of manhood gives us the courage to combat with its horror. The Septembers, since my twentieth year, have brought it with fatal certainty to *me*. God alone knows how long I shall be able to withstand the taint it gives to my thoughts when waking, and to the dreams upon my haunted pillow.

“You will readily see, in what I have said, another reason for my silence toward you on this subject. In the strong sympathy and sensitive imagination of a woman, might easily be bred, by too vivid picturing, a fancy which would be as palpable almost as the reality ; and I wished you to arrive at woman's years with a belief that it was but a monomaniac affection of my own brain—a disease to pity but not to share. You are now twenty. The females of my family *have invariably seen the phantom at seventeen !* Do you anticipate the painful inference I draw from the fact that this spectre is *invisible to you !*

"No, Angelica! you are *not my daughter!* The Aymar blood does not run in your veins, and I know not how much it will soften the knowledge of your mother's frailty to know, that you are spared the dread inheritance, that would have been yours with a legitimacy of honor. I had grounds for this belief at your birth, but I thought it due to the hallowed character of woman and wife to summon courage to wait for confirmation. Had I acted out the impulse, then almost uncontrollable within me, I should have profited by the lawless land in which I resided, to add more weight to the errand of this phantom avenger. But time and reason have done their work upon me. Your mother is safe from open retribution. May God pardon her!

"You will have said, here, that since Count Pallardos has been revealed by the same pursuing Providence to be *my son*, I may well refrain from appearing as my wife's accuser. I have no wish to profit by the difference the world makes between infidelity in man, and infidelity in woman; nor to look, for an apology, into the law of nature upon which so general and undisputed a distinction must needs be founded. I confess the justice of Heaven's vengeance upon the crime—visited upon me, I fearfully believe, in the unconscious retaliation which gave you birth. Yet I can not, for this, treat you as the daughter of my blood.

"And this brings me to the object of my letter. With the care of years, I have separated, from the entail of Aymar, the bulk of my fortune. God has denied me a legitimate male heir, and I have long ago determined to leave, to its natural conflict with circumstances, the character of a child I knew to be mine, and to adopt its destiny, if it proved worthy, should my fears as to your own parentage, be confirmed by the undeniable testimony of our spectral curse. *Count Pallardos is that child.* Fate drew him here, without my interference, as the crisis of your destiny turned against you. The innocent was not to be punished for the guilty, and the inheritance he takes from you goes back to you—with his love in wedlock! So, at least, appearances have led me to believe, and so would seem to be made apparent the kind provisions of Heaven against our resentful injustices. I must confess that I shall weep tears of joy if it be so, for, dear Angelica, you have wound yourself around my heart, nearer to its core than the coil of this serpent revenge. I shall find it to be so, I am

sadly sure, if I prove incorrect in my suppositions as to your attachment.

"I have now to submit to you, I trust only as a matter of form, two offers for your hand—one from Mr. Townley Mynners, and the other (conditional, however, with your fortune,) from Lord Frederick Beauchief. An annuity of five hundred a year would be all you would receive for a fortune, and your choice, of course, is free. As the Countess Pallardos, you would share a very large fortune (my gifts to *my son*, by a transfer to be executed this day), and to that destiny, if need be, I tearfully urge you.

"Affectionately yours, my dear Angelica, "AYMAR."

With one more letter, perhaps, the story will be sufficiently told.

"DEAR COUNT,—You will wonder at receiving a friendly note from me, after my refusal, two months since, to meet you over 'pistols and coffee;' but reparation may not be too late, and this is to say, that you have your choice between two modes of settlement, viz:—to accept for your stable the hunter you *stole from me* (*vide* police report) and allow me to take a glass of wine with you at my own table and bury the hatchet, *or*, to shoot at me if you like, according to your original design. Mynners and Beauchief hope you will select the latter, as they owe you a grudge for the possession of your incomparable bride and her fortune; but I trust you will prefer the horse, which (if I am rightly informed) bore you to the declaration of love at Chasteney. Reply to Crockford's.

"Your's ever (if you like),

"Count Pallardos."

"POMFRET DALLINGER.

Is the story told? I think so!

GETTING TO WINDWARD.

CHAPTER I.

LONDON is an abominable place to dine in. I mean, of course, unless you are free of a club, invited out, or pay a ridiculous price for a French dinner. The unknown stranger, adrift on the streets, with a traveller's notions of the worth of things to eat, is much worse off, as to his venture for a meal, than he would be in the worst town of the worst province of France—much worse off than he would be in New York or

New Orleans. There is a "Very's," it is true, and there are one or two *restaurants*, so called, in the Haymarket; but it is true, notwithstanding, that short of a two-guinea dinner at the Clarendon, or some hotel of this class, the next best thing is a simple pointed steak, with potatoes, at a chop-house. The admirable club-system (admirable for club-members) has absorbed all the intermediate degrees of eating-houses, and the traveller's chance and solitary meal, must be either absurdly expensive, or dismally furnished and attended.

The only real liberty one ever enjoys in a metropolis is the interval (longer or shorter, as one is more or less a philosopher) between his arrival and the delivery of his letters of introduction. While perfectly unknown, dreading no rencontre of acquaintances, subject to no care of dress, equipage or demeanor, the stranger feels, what he never feels afterward, a complete *abandon* to what immediately surrounds him, a complete willingness to be amused in any shape which chance pleases to offer, and, his desponding loneliness serving him like the dark depths of a well, he sees lights invisible from the higher level of amusement.

Tired of my solitary meals in the parlour of a hotel during my first week in London, I made the round of such dining-places as I could inquire out at the West End—of course, from the reserved habits of the country towards strangers, making no acquaintances, and scarce once exchanging a glance with the scores who sat at the tables around me. Observation was my only amusement, and I felt afterwards indebted to those silent studies of character for more acquaintance with the under-crust of John Bull, than can be gathered from books or closer intercourse. It is foreign to my present purpose, however, to tell why his pride should seem want of curiosity, and why his caution and delicacy should show like insensibility and coldness. I am straying from my story.

The covered promenade of the Burlington Arcade is, on rainy days, a great allure for a small chop-house hard by, "The Blue Posts." This is a snug little tavern, with the rear of its two stories cut into a single dining-room, where steaks, ale, and punch, may be had in unusual perfection. It is frequented ordinarily by a class of men peculiar, I should think, to England—taciturn, methodical in their habits, and highly respectable in their appearance—men who seem to have no amusements and no circle of friends, but who come in at

six and sit over their punch and the newspapers till bed-time, without speaking a syllable, except to the waiter, and apparently turning a cold shoulder of discouragement to any one in the room who may be disposed to offer a passing remark. They hang their hats daily on the same peg, daily sit at the same table, (where the chair is turned down for them by William, the short waiter), daily drink a small pitcher of punch after their half-pint of sherry, and daily read, from beginning to end, the Herald, Post, and Times, with the variation of the Athenæum and Spectator, on Saturdays and Sundays. I at first hazarded various conjectures as to their condition in life. They were evidently unmarried, and men of easy, though limited means—men of no great care, and no high hopes, and in a fixed station; yet of that degree of intelligence and firm self-respect which, in other countries (the United States, certainly, at least), would have made them sought for, in some more social and higher sphere than that with which they seemed content. I afterwards obtained something of a clue to the mystery of the “Blue Posts” society, by discovering two of the most respectable looking of its customers in the exercise of their daily avocations. One man, of fine phrenological development, rather bald, and altogether very intellectual in his “*os sublime*,” I met at the rooms of a fashionable friend, taking his measure for pantaloons. He was the foreman of a celebrated Bond-street tailor. The other was the head-shopman of a famous haberdasher in Regent-street; and either might have passed for Godwin the novelist, or Babbidge the calculator—with those who have seen those great intellects only in their imaginations. It is only in England, that men who, like these, have read or educated themselves far above their situations in life, would quietly submit to the arbitrary disqualifications of their pursuits, and agree unresistingly to the sentence of exile from the society suited to their mental grade. But here, again, I am getting away from my story.

It was the close of a London rainy day. Weary of pacing my solitary room, I sallied out, as usual, to the Burlington Arcade (I say *as usual*, for in a metropolis where it rains nine days out of ten, rainy-weather resorts become habitual). The little shops on either side were brightly lit, the rain pattered on the glass roof over head; and to one who had not a single acquaintance in so vast a city, even the passing of the

crowd and the glittering of lights seemed a kind of society. I began to speculate on the characters of those who passed and repassed me in the turns of the short gallery; and the dinner-hours coming round, and the men gradually thinning off from the crowd, I adjourned to the Blue Posts with very much the feeling of a reader interrupted in the progress of a novel. One of the faces that had most interested me was that of a foreigner, who with a very dejected air leaned on the arm of an older man, and seemed promenading to kill time, without any hope of killing his *ennui*. On seating myself at one of the small tables, I was agreeably surprised to find the two foreigners my close neighbours; and in the national silence of the company present, broken only by the clatter of knives and forks, it was impossible to avoid overhearing every word spoken by either. After a look at me, as if to satisfy themselves that I, too, was a John Bull, they went on with their conversation in French; which, so long as it was confined to topics of drink and platter, weather and news, I did not care to interrupt. But, with their progress through a second pint of sherry, personal topics came up; and as they seemed to be conversing with an impression that their language was not understood, I felt obliged to remind them that I was overhearing unwillingly what they probably meant for a private conversation. With a frankness which I scarcely expected, they at once requested me to transfer my glass to their table; and calling for a pitcher of punch, they extended their confidence by explaining to me the grounds of the remarks I had heard, and continuing to converse freely on the subject. Through this means, and a subsequent most agreeable acquaintance, I possessed myself of the circumstances of the following story; and having thus shown the reader (rather digressively, I must own) how I came by it, I proceed in the third person, trusting that my narration will not now seem like the "coinage of the brain."

The two gentlemen dining at the Blue Posts on the rainy day just mentioned, were Frenchmen, and political exiles. With the fortunes of the younger, this story has chiefly to do. He was a man past the sentimental age, perhaps nearer thirty-seven than thirty-five, less handsome than distinguished in his appearance, yet with one of those variable faces which are handsome for single instants once in a half hour, more or less. His companion called him Belaceueil.

"I could come down to my circumstances," he said to Monsieur St. Leger, his friend, "if I knew *how*. It is not courage that is wanting. I would do anything for a livelihood. But what is the first step? What is the next step from this? This last dinner—this last night's lodging—I am at the end of my means; and unless I accept of charity from you, which I will not, to-morrow must begin my descent. Where to put my foot?"

He stopped and looked down into his glass, with the air of a man who only expects an answer to refute its reasoning.

"My dear Belaccueil," said the other, after a moment's hesitation, "you were famous in your better days for almost universal accomplishment. Mimic, dancer, musician, cook—what was there, in our merry carnival-time, to which you did not descend with success for mere amusement? Why not now for that independence of livelihood, to which you adhere so pertinaciously?"

"You will be amused to find," he answered, "how well I have sounded the depths of every one of these resources. The French theatre of London has refused me point-blank all engagement, spite of the most humiliating exhibitions of my powers of mimicry before the stage-manager and a fifth-rate actress. I am not musician enough for a professor, though very well for an amateur; and have advertised in vain for employment as a teacher of music, and—what was your other vocation!—cook! Oh no! I have just science enough to mend a bad dinner and spoil a good one; though I declare to you I would willingly don the white cap and apron, and dive for life to the basement. No, my friend, I have even offered myself as assistant dancing-master, and failed! Is not that enough? If it is not, let me tell you that I would sweep the crossings, if my appearance would not excite curiosity; or turn dustman, if I were strong enough for the labour. Come down! Show me how to come down, and see whether I am not prepared to do it. But you do not know the difficulty of earning a penny in London. Do you suppose, with all the influence and accomplishments I possess, I could get the place of this scrubby waiter who brings us our cigars? No, indeed! His situation is a perfect castle—impregnable to those below him. There are hundreds of poor wretches within a mile of us, who would think themselves in Paradise to get his situa-

tion. How easy it is for the rich to say, 'Go and work!' and how difficult to know how and where!"

Belaccueil looked at his friend as if he felt that he had justified his own despair, and expected no comfort.

"Why not try matrimony?" said St. Leger. "I can provide you the means for a six months' siege, and you have better qualification for success than nine-tenths of the adventurers who have succeeded."

"Why—I could do even that—for, with all hope of prosperity, I have of course given up all idea of a romantic love. But I could not practise deceit; and, without pretending to some little fortune of my own, the chances are small. Besides, you remember my ill luck at Naples."

"Ah, that was a love affair, and you were too honest."

"Not for the girl, God bless her! She would have married me, penniless as I was; but through the interference of that officious and purse-proud Englishman, her friends put me *hors de combat*."

"What was his name? Was he a relative?"

"A mere chance acquaintance of their own, but he entered at once upon the office of family adviser. He was rich, and he had it in his power to call me an 'adventurer.' I did not discover his interference till some time after, or he would perhaps have paid dearly for his nomenclature."

"Who did you say it was?"

"Hitchings! Mr. Plantagenet Hitchings, of Hitchings Park, Devonshire—and the one point, to which I cling, of a gentleman's privileges, is that of calling him to account, should I ever meet him."

St. Leger smiled, and sat thoughtfully silent for a while. Belaccueil pulled apart the stems of a bunch of grapes on his plate, and was silent with a very different expression.

"You are willing," said the former, at last, "to teach music and dancing, for a proper compensation."

"Parbleu! Yes!"

"And if you could unite this mode of support with a very pretty revenge upon Mr. Plantagenet Hitchings (with whom, by the way, I am very well acquainted), you must not object to the two-fold thread in your destiny?"

"They would be threads of gold, *mon ami*!" said the surprised Belaccueil.

St. Leger called for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote a letter

at the Blue Posts, which the reader will follow to its destination, as the next step in this story.

CHAPTER II.

A GREEN angel (I mean an angel ignorant of the world) would probably suppose that the feeding of these animal bodies of ours, if not done in secret, must at least be the one act of human life separated entirely from the more heavenly emotions. Yet the dinner is a meal dear to lovers; and novelists and tale-tellers choose the moments stolen from fork and plate for the birth and interchange of the most delicious and tender sentiments of our existence. Miss Hitchings, while unconsciously shocking Monsieur Sansou by tilting her soup-plate for the last spoonful of vermicelli, was controlling the beating of a heart full of feminine and delicate tenderness; and, as the tutor was careful never to direct his regards to the other end of the table (for reasons of his own), Miss Henrietta laid the unction to her soul that such indifference to the prettiest girl who had ever honoured them as a guest, proved the strength of her own magnet, and put her more at ease on the subject of Monsieur Sansou's admiration. He, indeed, was committing the common fault of men whose manners are naturally agreeable—playing that passive and grateful game of courtesy and attention so easy to the object of regard, and so delightful to a woman, who is never so blest as in bestowing. Besides, he had an object in suppressing his voice to the lowest audible pitch, and the rich and deep tone, sunk only to escape the ear of another, sounded, to the watchful and desiring sense of her to whom it was addressed, like the very key-note and harmony of affection.

At a table so surrounded with secrets, conversation flagged, of course. Mr. Hitchings thought it very up-hill work to entertain Miss Hervey, whose heart and senses were completely absorbed in the riddle of Belaccueil's disguise and presence; Mr. Hervey, the uncle, found old Mrs. Plantagenet rather absent, for the smitten dame had eyes for every movement of Monsieur Sansou; and the tutor himself, with his resentment towards his host, and his suspicions of the love of his daughter, his reviving passion for Miss Hervey, and his designs on Mrs. Plantagenet, had enough to render him as

silent as the latter could wish, and as apparently insensible to the attraction of the fair stranger.

How little we know what is in the bosoms of those around us! How natural it is, however, to feel and act as if we knew—to account for all that appears on the surface by the limited acquaintance we have with circumstances and feelings—to resent an indifference of which we know not the cause—to approve or condemn, without allowance for chagrin, or despair, or love, or hope, or distress—any of the deep undercurrents for ever at work in the depth of human bosoms. The young man at your side at a dinner-party may have a duel on his hands for the morning, or a disgrace imminent in credit or honour, or a refused heart or an accepted one, newly crushed or newly made happy; or (more common still, and less allowed for) he may feel the first impression of disease, or the consequences of an indigestion; and for his agreeableness or disagreeableness, you try to account by something in yourself, some feeling toward yourself—as if you, and you only, could affect his spirits or give a colour to his mood of manners. The old man's thought of death, the mother's overwhelming interest in her child, the woman's uprising of emotion or love, are visitors to the soul that come unbidden and out of time, and you can neither feast nor mourn, secure against their interruption. It would explain many a coldness, could we look into the heart concealed from us. We should often pity when we hate, love when we think we cannot even forgive, admire where we curl the lip with scorn and indignation. To judge without reserve of any human action is a culpable temerity, of all our sins the most unfeeling and frequent.

I will deal frankly with you, dear reader. I have arrived at a stage of my story which, of all the stages of story-writing, I detest the most cordially. Poets have written about the difficulty of *beginning* a story (vide Byron)—*ça ne me coûte pas*; others of the *ending*—that I do with facility, joy, and rejoicing. But the *love pathos* of a story—the place where the reader is expected to sigh, weep, or otherwise express his emotion—that is the point, I confess, the most difficult to write, and the most unsatisfactory when written. “*Pourquoi, Sir Knight?*” Not because it is difficult to write love-scenes—according to the received mode—not that it is difficult to please those (a large majority) who never truly loved, and

whose ideas, therefore, of love and its making, are transcendentalized out of all truth and nature—not that it would be more labour to do this than to copy a circular, or write a love-letter for a modest swain (this last my besetting occupation)—but because, just over the inkstand, there peers a face, sometimes of a man of forty, past the nonsense of life, but oftener of some friend, a woman who has loved, and this last more particularly *knows* that true love is never readable or sensible—that if its language be truly written, it is never in polished phrase or musical cadence—that it is silly, but for its concealed meaning, embarrassed and blind, but for the interpreting and wakeful heart of one listener—that love, in short, is the god of unintelligibility, mystery, and adorable nonsense, and, of course, that which I have written (if readable and sensible) is out of taste and out of sympathy, and none but fancy-lovers and enamoured brains (not hearts) will approve or believe it.

D'Israeli, the younger, is one of the few men of genius who, having seen truth without a veil, dare to reveal the vision; and he has written *Henrietta Temple*—the silliest yet truest love-book of modern time. The critics (not an amative race) have given him a benefit of the “besom” of ridicule, but D'Israeli, far from being the effeminate intellect they would make him, is one of the most original and intrepid men of genius living, and whether the theme be “wine, woman, or war,” he writes with fearless truth, piquancy, and grace. Books on love, however, should be read by lovers only, and pity it is that there is not an ink in chemistry, invisible save to the eye kindled with amatory fire. But “to our muttons.”

It was not leap-year, but Monsieur Belaccueil, on the day of the dinner party at Hitchings Park, was made aware (I will not say by proposals, for ladies make known their inclinations in ways much less formidable)—he was made aware, I say, that the hearts of three of the party were within the flight of his arrow. Probably his humble situation reversed the usual relative position of the sexes in the minds of the dame and damsels—and certainly there is no power woman exercises so willingly, as a usurpation of the masculine privilege. I have stated my objection to detail the dialogue between Miss Hitchings and her tutor at the dinner-table. To be recorded faithfully, the clatter of silver forks on china,

the gurgle of wine, the interruptions of the footmen with champagne and vegetables, should all be literally interspersed—for, to all the broken sentences, (so pathetic when properly punctuated—vide Neal's novels) these were the sequels and the accompaniments: "No, thank you!" and "If you please," and "May I fill your glass?"—have filled out, to the perfect satisfaction of the lady, many an unfinished sentence upon which depended the whole destiny of her affections; and, as I said before, the truth is not faithfully rendered, when these interstices are supplied.

It was dark when the ladies left the dinner-table, followed by Monsieur Sansou, and, at the distance of a few feet from the windows opening on the lawn, the air was black and impenetrable. There were no stars visible and no moon, but the clouds which were gathering after a drought, seemed to hush the air with their long expected approach, and it was one of those soft, still, yet murky and fragrant nights, when the earth seems to breathe only—without light, sound, or motion. What lover does not remember such a night?

Oppressed with the glaring lights, and the company of people she cared nothing about, Miss Hervey stepped out upon the lawn, and, with her face lifted as if to draw deeper inhalations of the dew and freshness, she strolled leisurely over the smooth carpet of grass. At a slight turn to avoid a clump of shrubbery, she encountered Belaccueil, who was apologizing and about to pass her, when she called him by his name, and passing her arm through his, led him on to the extremity of the lawn. A wire fence arrested their progress, and, leaning against it, Miss Hervey inquired into the cause of the disguise she had penetrated, and softened and emboldened by the fragrant darkness, said all that a woman might say of tenderness and encouragement. Belaccueil's heart beat with pride and gratified *amour propre*, but he confined himself to the expression of this feeling, and, leaving the subject open, took advantage of Mrs. Plantagenet's call to Miss Hervey from the window, to leave her and resume his ramble through the grounds.

The supper tray had been brought in, and the party were just taking their candles to separate, when the tutor entered at the glass door and arrested the steps of Mrs. Plantagenet. She set down her candle and courtesied a good night to the ladies (Mr. Hitchings had gone to bed, for wine made him

sleepy, and Mr. Hervey always retired early—where he was bored), and, closing the windows, mixed a glass of negus for Monsieur Sansou; and herself pulling a sandwich to pieces, deliberately, and it must be confessed, somewhat patronisingly, invited the Frenchman to become her lord. And after a conversation, which (*la vérité avant tout*) turned mainly on will and investments, the widow dame smiled blissfully to bed, and Belaccueil wrote the following letter to his friend and adviser—

“MY DEAR ST. LEGER.—Enclosed you have the only surviving lock of my grizzled wig—sign and symbol that my disguises are over, and my object attained. The wig burns at this instant in the grate, *item* my hand-ruffles, *item* sundry embroidered cravats *à la veille cour*, *item* (this last not without some trouble at my heart) a solitary love-token from Constantia Hervey. One faded rose—given me at Pæstum, the day before I was driven disgraced from her presence, by the interference of this insolent fool—one faded rose has crisped and faded into smoke with the rest. And so fled from the world the last hope of a warm and passionate heart, which never gave up its destiny till now—never felt that it was made in vain, guarded, refined, cherished in vain, till that long-loved flower lay in ashes. I am accustomed to strip emotion of its drapery—determined to feel nothing but what is real—yet this moment, turn it and strip it, and deny its illusions as I will, is anguish. ‘Self-inflicted,’ you smile and say!

“You will marvel what stars will not come into conjunction, when I tell you that Miss Hervey is at this moment under the same roof with me and my affianced bride, and you will marvel what good turn I have done the devil, that he should, in one day, offer me my enemy’s daughter, my enemy’s fortune (with the drawback of an incumbance), and the woman who I thought had spurned me. After all, it is a devil’s gift, for, in choosing that to which I am most impelled, I crush hope, and inflict pain, and darken my own heart for ever. I could not have done this once. Manhood and poverty have embittered me.

“Miss Hitchings has chosen to fall in love with her tutor. She is seventeen, a sweet blonde, with large, suffused eyes, tender, innocent, and (without talent) singularly earnest and confiding. I could be very happy with such a woman, and it

would have been a very tolerable revenge (failing the other) to have stolen her from her father. But he would have disinherited and forgotten us, and I have had enough of poverty, and cannot afford to be forgotten by my enemy.

"You never saw Miss Hervey. It is not much to tell you she is the most beautiful woman I have met. If she were not beautiful, her manners would win all hearts. If her manners were less fascinating, her singular talents would make her remarkable. She is not appreciated, because her beauty blinds people to her talents, and her manners make them forget her beauty. She is something in the style of the Giorgione we adored at Venice—a transparently dark beauty, with unfathomable eyes and lashes that sweep her cheek; her person tall and full, and her neck set on like Zenobia's. Yet she is not a proud woman—I think she is not. She is too natural and true to do anything which looks like pride, save walk like an empress. She says everything rightly, penetrates instantly to the core of meaning—sings, dances, talks, with the ease, confidence, grace, faultlessness, with which a swallow flies. Perfection in all things is her nature. I am jotting down her qualities now as they are allowed by the world. I will not write of them like a lover. Oh, my friend, with what plummet can you fathom the depths of my resentments, when, for them, I forego possession of this woman! She offered me, two hours since, the unqualified control of her destiny! She asked me, with tremulous voice, to forgive her for the wrong done me in Italy! She dropped that faultless and superb head on my bosom, and told me that she loved me—and I never answered! The serpent in my heart tied up my tongue; and, with cold thanks and fiend-like resistance to the bliss of even once pressing her to my bosom, I left her! I do not know myself when I remember that I have done this. I am possessed—driven out—by some hard and bitter spirit, who neither acts nor speaks like me. Yet could I not undo what I have done.

"To-morrow morning will disappear Monsieur Sansou from Hitchings Park, and, on the brief condition of a brief ceremony, the law, the omnipotent law, will deliver into my hands, the lands, tenements, goods, chattels, and liberty of my enemy—for even so deeply has he sunk into the open pocket of Mrs. Plantagenet! She holds mortgages on all he has, for money advanced, and all that is hers will be mine, without

reserve. The roof I have been living in degradation under, will be to-morrow my own. The man who called me an adventurer, who stood between me and my love, who thrust me from my heaven, without cause or provocation—the meddling fool, who boasts that he saved a countrywoman from a French swindler, (he has recurred to it often in my presence), will be, to-morrow, my dependant, beggar for shelter, suppliant for his liberty and subsistence! Do you ask if that outweighs the love of the woman I have lost? Alas, yes!

“You are older, and have less taste for sentiment even than I. I will not bore you with my crowd of new feelings in this situation. My future wife is amiable and good. She is also vain, unattractive, and old. I shall be kind to her, and endeavour that she shall not be disenchanted, and, if I can make her happy, it may mollify my penance for the devil with which I am possessed. Miss Hitchings will lose nothing by having loved me, for she shall be the heiress of my wealth, and her father—but I will not soil my heart by thinking of an alleviation to his downfall.

“Farewell, *mon ami*. Congratulate and pity me.

“ADOLPHE BELACCUEIL.”

In one of the most fashionable squares of London lives, “in the season,” Monsieur Belaccueil, one of the most hospitable foreigners in that great metropolis. He is a pensive and rather melancholy-looking man by day; but society, which he seems to seek like an opiate to restless feeling, changes him to a gay man, the most mirth-loving of Amphytrions. His establishment is presided over by his wife, who, as his society is mostly French, preserves a respectable silence, but seems contented with her lot, and proud of her husband; while in Miss Plantagenet (*ci-devant* Miss Hitchings) his guests find his table’s chief attraction—one of the prettiest heiresses and most loveable girls in London. How deeply Monsieur Belaccueil still rejoices at his success in “getting to windward,” is a matter of problem. Certainly there is one chariot which passes him in his solitary ride in the park, to which he bows with a pang of unabating and miserable anguish. And, if the occupant of that plain chariot share at all in his suffering, she has not the consolation to which he flies in society—for a more secluded and lonely woman lives not in the great solitude of London, than Constantia Hervey.

TWO BUCKETS IN A WELL.

"Five hundred dollars a year!" echoed Fanny Bellairs, as the first silver grey of the twilight spread over her picture.

"And my art," modestly added the painter, prying into his bright copy of the lips pronouncing upon his destiny.

"And how much may that be, at the present rate of patronage—one picture a year, painted for love!"

"Fanny, how can you be so calculating!"

"By the bumps over my eyebrows, I suppose. Why, my dear coz, we have another state of existence to look forward to—old man-age and old woman-age! What am I to do with five hundred dollars a year, when my old frame wants gilding—(to use one of your own similes)—I shan't always be pretty Fanny Bellairs!"

"But, good Heavens! we shall grow old together!" exclaimed the painter, sitting down at her feet, "and what will you care for other admiration, if your husband see you still beautiful, with the eyes of memory and habit?"

"Even if I were sure he would so look upon me!" answered Miss Bellairs, more seriously, "I can not but dread an old age without great means of embellishment. Old people, except in poetry and in very primitive society, are dishonoured by wants and cares. And, indeed, before we are old—when neither young nor old—we want horses and ottomans, kalydor and conservatories, books, pictures, and silk curtains—all quite out of the range of your little allowance, don't you see!"

"You do not love me, Fanny!"

"I do—and will marry you, Philip—as I, long ago, with my whole heart, promised. But I wish to be happy with you—as happy, quite as happy, as is at all possible, with our best efforts, and coolest, discreetest management. I laugh the matter over sometimes, but I may tell you, since you are determined to be in earnest, that I have treated it, in my solitary thought, as the one important event of my life—(so indeed it is!)—and, assuch, worthy of all fore-thought, patience, self-denial, and calculation. To inevitable ills I can make up my mind like other people. If your art were your only hope of subsistence—why—I don't know—(should I look well as a page?)—I don't know that I couldn't run your errands, and grind your paints in hose and doublet. But there is another door open

for you—a counting-house door, to be sure—leading to opulence and all the appliances of dignity and happiness, and through this door, my dear Philip, the art you would live by comes to pay tribute and beg for patronage. Now, out of your hundred and twenty reasons, give me the two stoutest and best, why you should refuse your brother's golden offer of partnership—my share, in your alternative of poverty, left for the moment out of the question.”

Rather overborne by the confident decision of his beautiful cousin, and having probably made up his mind that he must ultimately yield to her, Philip replied in a lower and more dejected tone:—

“If you were not to be a sharer in my renown, should I be so fortunate as to acquire it, I should feel as if it were selfish to dwell so much on my passion for distinction, and my devotion to my pencil as the means of winning it. My heart is full of you—but it is full of ambition, too, paradox though it be. I cannot live ignoble. I should not have felt worthy to press my love upon you—worthy to possess you—except with the prospect of celebrity in my art. You make the world dark to me, Fanny! You close down the sky, when you shut out this hope! Yet it shall be so.”

Philip paused a moment, and the silence was uninterrupted.

“There was another feeling I had, upon which I have not insisted,” he continued. By my brother's project, I am to reside almost wholly abroad. Even the little stipend I have to offer you now is absorbed of course by the investment of my property in his trading capital, and marriage, till I have partly enriched myself, would be even more hopeless than at present. Say the interval were five years—and five years of separation!”

“With happiness in prospect, it would soon pass, my dear Philip!”

“But is there nothing wasted in this time? My life is yours—the gift of love. Are not these coming five years the very flower of it!—a mutual loss, too, for are they not, even more emphatically, the very flower of yours? Eighteen and twenty-five are ages at which to marry, not ages to defer. During this time the entire flow of my existence is at its crowning fullness—passion, thought, joy, tenderness, susceptibility to beauty and sweetness—all I have that can be diminished or tarnished, or made dull by advancing age and contact

with the world, is thrown away—for its spring and summer. Will the autumn of life repay us for this? Will it—even if we are rich and blest with health, and as capable of an unblemished union as now? Think of this a moment, dear Fanny!”

“I do—it is full of force and meaning, and, could we marry now, with a tolerable prospect of competency, it would be irresistible. But poverty in wedlock, Philip—”

“What do you call poverty? If we can suffice for each other, and have the necessities of life, we are not poor! My art will bring us consideration enough—which is the main end of wealth, after all—and, of society, speaking for myself only, I want nothing. Luxuries for yourself, Fanny—means for your dear comfort and pleasure—you should not want if the world held them, and surely the unbounded devotion of one man to the support of the one woman he loves, *ought* to suffice for the task! I am strong—I am capable of labour—I have limbs to toil, if my genius and my present means fail me, and, oh Heaven! you could not want!”

“No, no, no! I thought not of want!” murmured Miss Bellairs, “I thought only—”

But she was not permitted to finish the sentence.

“Then my bright picture for the future *may* be realized!” exclaimed Philip, knitting his hands together in a transport of hope. “I may build up a reputation, with *you* for the constant partner of its triumphs and excitements. I may go through the world, and have some care in life besides subsistence, how I shall sleep, and eat, and accumulate gold; some companion, who, from the threshold of manhood, shared every thought—and knew every feeling—some pure and present angel, who walked with me and purified my motives and ennobled my ambitions, and received from my lips and eyes, and from the beating of my heart against her own, all the love I had to give in a lifetime. Tell me, Fanny! tell me, my sweet cousin! is not this a picture of bliss, which, combined with success in my noble art, might make a Paradise on earth for you and me?”

The hand of Fanny Bellairs rested on the upturned forehead of her lover, as he sat at her feet in the deepening twilight, and she answered him with such sweet words as are linked together by spells known only to woman—but his palette and pencils were, nevertheless, burned in solemn holocaust that very night, and the lady carried her point, as ladies must. And,

to the importation of silks from Lyons, was devoted, thenceforth, the genius of a Raphael—perhaps! Who knows?

The reader will naturally have gathered from this dialogue that Miss Fanny Bellairs had black eyes, and was rather below the middle stature. She was a belle, and it is only belle-metal of this particular description which is not fusible by “burning words.” She had mind enough to appreciate fully the romance and enthusiasm of her cousin, Philip Ballister, and knows precisely the phenomena which a tall *blonde* (this complexion of woman being soluble in love and tears), would have exhibited under a similar experiment. While the fire of her love glowed, therefore, she opposed little resistance, and seemed softened and yielding, but her purpose remained unaltered, and she rang out “no!” the next morning with a tone as little changed as a convent-bell from matins to vespers, though it has passed meantime through the furnace of an Italian noon.

Fanny was not a designing girl, either. She might have found a wealthier customer for her heart than her cousin Philip. And she loved this cousin as truly and well as her nature would admit, or as need be, indeed. But two things had conspired to give her the unmalleable quality just described—a natural disposition to confide, first and foremost, on all occasions, in her own sagacity, and a vivid impression made upon her mind by a childhood of poverty. At the age of twelve she had been transferred from the distressed fireside of her mother, Mrs. Bellairs, to the luxurious roof of her aunt, Mrs. Ballister, and, her mother dying soon after, the orphan girl was adopted, and treated as a child; but the memory of the troubled hearth, at which she had first learned to observe and reason, coloured all the purposes and affections, thoughts, impulses, and wishes of the ripening girl, and to think of happiness in any proximity to privation seemed to her impossible, even though it were in the bosom of love. Seeing no reason to give her cousin credit for any knowledge of the world beyond his own experience, she decided to think for him as well as love him, and, not being so much pressed as the enthusiastic painter by the “*besoin d’aimer et de se faire aimer*,” she very composedly prefixed, to the possession of her hand, the trifling achievement of getting rich—quite sure that

if he knew as much as she, he would willingly run that race without the incumbrance of matrimony.

The death of Mr. Ballister, senior, had left the widow and her two boys more slenderly provided for than was anticipated—Phil's portion, after leaving college, producing the moderate income before mentioned. The elder brother had embarked in his father's business, and it was thought best on all hands for the younger Ballister to follow his example. But Philip, whose college leisure had been devoted to poetry and painting, and whose genius for the latter, certainly, was very decided, brought down his habits by a resolute economy to the limits of his income, and took up the pencil for a profession. With passionate enthusiasm, great purity of character, distaste for all society not in harmony with his favourite pursuit, and an industry very much concentrated and rendered effective by abstemious habits, Philip Ballister was very likely to develope what genius might lie between his head and hand, and his progress in the first year had been allowed, by eminent artists, to give very unusual promise. The Ballisters were still together, under the maternal roof, and the painter's studies were the portraits of the family, and Fanny's picture, of course, much the most difficult to finish. It would be very hard if a painter's portrait of his liege mistress, the lady of his heart, were not a good picture, and Fanny Bellairs on canvas was divine accordingly. If the copy had more softness of expression than the original (as it was thought to have), it only proves that wise men have for some time suspected, that love is more dumb than blind, and the faults of our faultless idols are noted, however unconsciously. Neither thumb-screws nor hot coals—nothing probably but repentance after matrimony—would have drawn Philip Ballister, in words, the same correction of his mistress's foible, that had oozed out through his treacherous pencil!

Cupid is often drawn as a stranger pleading to be "taken in," but it is a miracle that he is not invariably drawn as a portrait-painter. A bird tied to the muzzle of a gun—an enemy who has written a book—an Indian prince under the protection of Giovanni Bulletto (Tuscan for John Bull),—is not more close upon demolition, one would think, than the heart of a lady delivered over to a painter's eyes, posed, draped and lighted with the one object of studying her beauty. If there be any magnetism in isolated attention, any in sted-

fast gazing, any in passes of the hand hither and thither—if there be any magic in *ce doux demi-jour* so loved in France, in stuff for flattery ready pointed and feathered, in freedom of admiration, “and all in the way of business”—then is a loveable sitter to a love-like painter in “parlous” vicinity (as the new school would phrase it), to sweetheart-land! Pleasure in a vocation has no offset in political economy as honour has (“the more honour the less profit,”) or portrait-painters would be poorer than poets,

And, *malgré* his consciousness of the quality which required softening in his cousin's beauty, and *malgré* his rare advantages for obtaining over her a lover's proper ascendancy, Mr. Philip Ballister bowed to the stronger will of Miss Fanny Bellairs, and sailed for France on his apprenticeship to Mammon.

The reader will please to advance five years. Before proceeding thence with our story, however, let us take a Parthian glance at the overstepped interval.

Philip Ballister had left New York with the triple vow, that he would enslave every faculty of his mind and body to business, that he would not return till he had made a fortune, and that such interstices as might occur in the building up of this château for felicity should he filled with sweet reveries about Fanny Bellairs. The forsworn painter had genius, as we have before hinted, and genius is (as much as it is any one thing), the power of concentration. He entered upon his duties accordingly, with a force, and patience of application, which soon made him master of what are called business habits, and, once in possession of the details, his natural cleverness gave him a speedy insight to all the scope and tactics of his particular field of trade. Under his guidance, the affairs of the house were soon in a much more prosperous train, and, after a year's residence at Lyons, Philip saw his way very clear to manage them with a long arm and take up his quarters in Paris.

“*Les faits sont les seuls hommes qui aient soin d'eux-mêmes,*” says a French novelist, but there is a period, early or late, in the lives of the cleverest men, when they become suddenly curious as to their capacity for the graces. Paris, to a stranger who does not visit in the Faubourg St. Germain, is a republic of personal exterior, where the degree of privilege depends, with Utopian impartiality, on the style of the outer man;

and Paris, therefore, if he is not already a Bachelor of Arts (qu?—*beau's Arts*), usually serves the traveller as an Alma Mater of the pomps and vanities.

Phil. Ballister, up to the time of his matriculation in *Chaussée D'Antin*, was a romantic-looking sloven. From this to a very dashing coxcomb is but half a step, and, to be rid of the coxcombry and retain a look of fashion, is still within the easy limits of imitation. But—to obtain superiority of presence, with no apparent aid from dress and no describable manner, and to display, at the same time, every natural advantage in effective relief, and, withal, to adapt this subtle philtre, not only to the approbation of the critical and censorious, but to the taste of fair women gifted with judgment as God pleases—this is a finish not born with any man (though unsuccessful if it do not seem to be), and never reached in the apprenticeship of life, and never reached at all by men not much above their fellows. He who has it, has “bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere,” for he must know, as a chart of quicksands, the pronounced models of other nations; but to be a “picked man of countries,” and to *have been* a coxcomb and a man of fashion, are, as a painter would say, but the setting of the palette toward the making of the *chef d'œuvre*.

Business prospered, and the facilities of leisure increased, while Ballister passed through these transitions of taste, and he found intervals to travel, and time to read, and opportunity to indulge, as far as he could with the eye only, his passion for knowledge in the arts. To all that appertained to the refinement of himself, he applied the fine feelers of a delicate and passionate construction, physical and mental, and, as the reader will already have included, wasted on culture comparatively unprofitable, faculties that would have been better employed but for the meddling of Miss Fanny Bellairs.

Ballister's return from France was heralded by the arrival of statuary and pictures, books, furniture, and numberless articles of tasteful and costly luxury. The reception of these by the family at home threw rather a new light on the probable changes in the long-absent brother, for, from the signal success of the business he had managed, they had very naturally supposed that it was the result only of unremitted and plodding care. Vague rumours of changes in his personal appearance

had reached them, such as might be expected from conformity to foreign fashions, but those who had seen Philip Ballister in France, and called subsequently on the family in New York, were not people qualified to judge of the man, either from their own powers of observation or from any confidence he was likely to put forward while in their society. His letters had been delightful, but they were confined to third-person topics, descriptions of things likely to interest them, &c., and Fanny had few addressed personally to herself, having thought it worth while, for the experiment sake, or for some other reason, to see whether love would subsist without its usual *pabulum* of tender correspondence, and a *veto* on love-letters having served her for a parting injunction at Phil's embarkation for Havre. However varied by their different fancies, the transformation looked for by the whole family was substantially the same—the romantic artist sobered down to a practical, plain man of business. And Fanny herself had an occasional misgiving as to her relish for his counting-house virtues and manners; though, on the detection of the feeling, she immediately closed her eyes upon it, and drummed up her delinquent constancy for “parade and inspection.”

All bustles are very much alike (we use the word as defined in Johnson), and the reader will appreciate our delicacy, besides, in not intruding on the first re-union of relatives and lovers long separated.

The morning after Philip Ballister's arrival, the family sat long at breakfast. The mother's gaze fastened untiringly on the features of her son—still her boy—prying into them with a vain effort to reconcile the face of the man with the cherished picture of the child with sunny locks, and noting little else than the work of inward change upon the countenance and expression. The brother, with the predominant feeling of respect for the intelligence and industry of one who had made the fortunes of the house, read only subdued sagacity in the perfect simplicity of his whole exterior. And Fanny—Fanny was puzzled. The *bourgeoisie* and ledger-bred hardness of manner which she had looked for were not there, nor any variety of the “foreign slip-slop” common to travelled youth, nor any superciliousness, nor (faith!) any wear and tear of youth and good looks—nothing that she expected—nothing! Not even a French guard-chain!

What there *was* in her cousin's manners and exterior, how-

ever, was much more difficult to define by Miss Bellairs than what there *was not*. She began the renewal of their intercourse with very high spirits, herself—the simple nature and unpretendingness of his address awakening only an unembarrassed pleasure at seeing him again—but she soon began to suspect there was an exquisite refinement in this very simplicity, and to wonder at “the trick of it;” and, after the first day passed in his society, her heart beat when he spoke to her, as it did not use to beat when she was sitting to him for her picture, and listening to his passionate love-making. And, with all her faculties, she studied him. What was the charm of his presence? He was himself, and himself only. He seemed perfect, but he seemed to have arrived at perfection like a statue, not like a picture—by what had been taken away, not by what had been laid on. He was as natural as a bird, and as graceful and unembarrassed. He neither forced conversation, nor pressed the little attentions of the drawing-room, and his attitudes were full of repose; yet she was completely absorbed in what he said, and she had been impressed imperceptibly with his high-bred politeness, and the singular elegance of his person. Fanny felt there was a change in her relative position to her cousin. In what it consisted, or which had the advantage, she was perplexed to discover; but she bit her lips as she caught herself thinking that, if she were not engaged to marry Philip Ballister, she should suspect that she had just fallen irrevocably in love with him.

It would have been a novelty in the history of Miss Bellairs that any event to which she had once consented, should admit of reconsideration; and the Ballister family, used to her strong will, were confirmed fatalists as to the coming about of her ends and aims. Her marriage with Philip, therefore, was discussed, *cœur ouvert*, from his first arrival, and, indeed, in her usual fashion of saving others the trouble of making up their minds, “herself had named the day.” This, it is true, was before his landing, and was, then, an effort of considerable magnanimity, as the expectant Penelope was not yet advised of her lover’s state of preservation or damages by cares and keeping. If Philip had not found his wedding-day fixed on his arrival, however, he probably would have had a voice in the naming of it, for, with Fanny’s new inspirations as to his character, there had grown up a new flower in her garden of beauties—timidity! What bird of the air had sown the seed

in such a soil was a problem to herself; but true it was! the confidant belle had grown a blushing trembler! She would as soon have thought of bespeaking her wings for the sky, as to have ventured on naming the day in a short week after.

The day *was* named, however, and the preparations went on—*nem con.*—the person most interested (after herself) accepting every congratulation and allusion, touching the event, with the most impenetrable suavity. The marbles and pictures, upholstery and services, were delivered over to the order of Miss Bellairs, and Philip, disposed, apparently, to be very much a recluse in his rooms, or, at other times, engrossed by troops of welcoming friends, saw much less of his bride elect than suited her wishes, and saw her seldom alone. By particular request, also, he took no part in the 'plenishing and embellishing of the new abode—not permitted even to inquire where it was situated; and, under this cover, besides the pleasure of having her own way, Fanny concealed a little secret, which, when disclosed, she now felt, would figure forth to Philip's comprehension, her whole scheme of future happiness. She had taken the elder brother into her counsels a fortnight after Philip's return, and, with his aid and consent, had abandoned the original idea of a house in town, purchased a beautifully-secluded estate and *cottage ornée*, on the East river, and transferred thither all the objects of art, furniture, &c. One room only of the maternal mansion was permitted to contribute its quota to the completion of the bridal dwelling—the wing, never since inhabited, in which Philip had made his essay as a painter—and, without variation of a cobweb, and, with whimsical care and effort on the part of Miss Fanny, this apartment was reproduced at Revedere—her own picture on the easel, as it stood on the night of his abandonment of his art, and palette, pencils and colours in tempting readiness on the table. Even the fire-grate of the old studio had been re-set in the new, and the cottage throughout had been re-fitted with a view to occupation in the winter. And to sundry hints on the part of the elder brother, that some thought should be given to a city residence—for the Christmas holidays at least—Fanny replied, through a blush, that she would never wish to see the town—with Philip at Revedere!

Five years had ripened and mellowed the beauty of Fanny Bellairs, and the same summer-time of youth had turned into fruit the feeling left by Philip in bud and flower. She was

ready now for love. She had felt the variable temper of society, and there was a presentiment in the heart, of receding flatteries, and the winter of life. It was with mournful self-reproach that she thought of the years wasted in separation, of her own choosing, from the man she loved; and, with the power to recall time, she would have thanked God with tears of joy for the privilege of retracing the chain of life to that link of parting. Not worth a day of those lost years, she bitterly confessed to herself, was the wealth they had purchased.

It lacked as little as one week of "the happy day," when the workmen were withdrawn from Revedere, and the preparations for a family breakfast, to be succeeded by the agreeable surprise of Philip informing him he was at home, were finally completed. One or two very intimate friends were added to the party, and the invitations (from the elder Ballister) proposed simply a *déjeuner sur l'herbe* in the grounds of an unoccupied villa, the property of an acquaintance.

With the subsiding of the excitement of return, the early associations which had temporarily confused and coloured the feelings of Philip Ballister, settled gradually away, leaving uppermost once more the fastidious refinement of the Parisian. Through this medium, thin and cold, the bubbles from the breathing of the heart of youth, rose rarely and reluctantly. The Ballisters held a good station in society, without caring for much beyond the easy conveniencies of life, and Fanny, though capable of any degree of elegance, had not seen the expediency of raising the tone of her manners above that of her immediate friends. Without being positively distasteful to Philip, the family circle, Fanny included, left him much to desire in the way of society, and, unwilling to abate the warmth of his attentions while with them, he had latterly pleaded occupation more frequently, and passed his time in the more congenial company of his library of art. This was the less noticed that it gave Miss Bellairs the opportunity to make frequent visits to the workmen at Revedere, and, in the polished devotion of her betrothed, when with her, Fanny saw nothing reflected, but her own daily increasing tenderness and admiration.

The morning of the *fête* came in like the air in an overture—a harmony of all the instruments of summer. The party were at the gate of Revedere by ten, and the drive through the avenue to the lawn drew a burst of delighted admiration

from all. The place was exquisite, and seen in its glory, and Fanny's heart was brimming with gratified pride and exultation. She assumed at once the dispensation of the honours, and beautifully she looked with her snowy dress and raven ringlets flitting across the lawn, and queening it like Perdita among the flowers. Having narrowly escaped bursting into tears of joy when Philip pronounced the place prettier than anything that he had seen in his travels, she was, for the rest of the day, calmly happy: and, with the grateful shade, the delicious breakfast in the grove, the rambling and boating on the river, the hours passed off like dreams, and no one even hinted a regret that the house itself was under lock and bar. And so the sun set, and the twilight came on, and the guests were permitted to order round their carriages and depart, the Ballisters accompanying them to the gate. And, on the return of the family through the avenue, excuses were made for idling hither and thither, till lights began to show through the trees, and, by the time of their arrival at the lawn, the low windows of the cottage poured forth streams of light, and the open doors, and servants busy within, completed a scene more like magic than reality. Philip was led in by the excited girl who was the fairy of the spell, and his astonishment of the discovery of his statuary and pictures, books and furniture, arranged in complete order within, was fed upon with the passionate delight of love in authority.

When an hour had been spent in examining and admiring the different apartments, an inner room was thrown open, in which supper was prepared, and this fourth act in the day's drama was lingered over in untiring happiness by the family.

Mrs. Ballister, the mother, rose and retired, and Philip pleaded indisposition, and begged to be shown to the room allotted to him. This was ringing-up the curtain for the last act sooner than had been planned by Fanny, but she announced herself as his chamberlain, and, with her hands affectionately crossed on his arm, led him to a suite of rooms in a wing still unvisited, and, with a good-night kiss, left him at the open door of the revived studio, furnished for the night with a bachelor's bed. Turning upon the threshold, he closed the door with a parting wish of sweet dreams, and Fanny, after listening a moment with a vain hope of overhearing some expression of pleasure, and lingering again on her way back to be overtaken by her surprised lover, sought her own bed

without rejoining the circle, and passed a sleepless and happy night of tears and joy.

Breakfast was served the next morning on a terrace overlooking the river, and it was voted by acclamation that Fanny never before looked so lovely. As none but the family were to be present, she had stolen a march on her marriage wardrobe, and added to her demi-toilet a morning cap of exquisite becomingness. Altogether, she looked deliciously wife-like, and did the honours of the breakfast-table with a grace and sweetness that warmed out love and compliments even from the sober soil of household intimacy. Philip had not yet made his appearance, and they lingered long at table, till at last a suggestion that he might be ill started Fanny to her feet, and she ran to his door before a servant could be summoned.

The rooms were open, and the bed had not been occupied. The candle was burned to the socket, and on the easel, resting against the picture, was a letter addressed—"Miss Fanny Bellairs."

THE LETTER.

"I have followed up to this hour, my fair cousin, in the path you have marked out for me. It has brought me back, in this chamber, to the point from which I started under your guidance, and if it had brought me back unchanged—if it restored me my energy, my hope, and my prospect of fame, I should pray heaven that it would also give me back my love, and be content—more than content, if it gave me back also my poverty. The sight of my easel and of the surroundings of my boyish dreams of glory have made my heart bitter. They have given form and voice to a vague unhappiness, which has haunted me through all these absent years—years of degrading pursuits and wasted powers—and it now impels me from you, kind and lovely as you are, with an aversion I cannot control. I cannot forgive you. You have thwarted me destiny. You have extinguished with sordid cares a lamp within me that might by this time have shone through the world. And what am I, since your wishes are accomplished? Enriched in pocket and bankrupt in happiness and self-respect.

"With a heart sick and a brain aching for distinction I have come to an unhonoured stand-still at thirty! I am a successful tradesman, and in this character I shall probably die. Could I begin to be a painter now, say you? Alas!

my knowledge of the art is too great for patience with the slow hand! I could not draw a line without despair. The pliant fingers and the plastic mind must keep pace to make progress in art. My taste is fixed and my imagination uncreative, because chained down by certainties; and the short sighted ardour and daring experiment which are indispensable to sustain and advance the follower in Raphael's footsteps are too far behind for my resuming. The tide ebbed from me at the accursed burning of my pencils by your pitiless hand, and from that hour I have felt hope receding. Could I be happy with you, stranded here in ignoble idleness, and owing to you the loss of my whole venture of opportunity? No, Fanny!—surely no!

“I would not be unnecessarily harsh. I am sensible of your affection and constancy. I have deferred this explanation unwisely, till the time and place make it seem more cruel. You are at this very moment, I well know, awake in your chamber, devoting to me the vigils of a heart overflowing with tenderness. And I would—if it were possible—if it were not utterly beyond my powers of self-sacrifice and concealment—I would affect a devotion I cannot feel, and carry out this error through a life of artifice and monotony. But here again the work is your own, and my feelings revert bitterly to your interference. If there were no other obstacle to my marrying you—if you were not associated repulsively with the dark cloud on my life, you are not the woman I could now enthrone in my bosom. We have diverged since the separation which I pleaded against, and which you commanded. I need for my idolatry, now, a creature to whom the sordid cares you have sacrificed me to are utterly unknown—a woman born and educated in circumstances where want is never feared, and where calculation never enters. I must lavish my wealth, if I fulfil my desire, on one who accepts it like the air she breathes, and who knows the value of nothing but love—a bird with a human soul and form, believing herself free of all the world is rich in, and careful only for pleasure and the happiness of those who belong to her. Such women, beautiful and highly educated, are found only in ranks of society between which and my own I have been increasing in distance—nay, building an impassable barrier in obedience to your control. Where I stop, interdicted by the stain of trade, the successful artist is free to enter. You have stamped me *plebeian*—you

would not share my slow progress toward a higher sphere, and you have disqualified me for attaining it alone. In your mercenary and immovable will, and in that only, lies the secret of our twofold unhappiness.

"I leave you to return to Europe. My brother and my friends will tell you I am mad and inexcusable, and look upon you as a victim. They will say that to have been a painter were nothing to the career that I might mark out for my ambition, if ambition I must have, in politics. Politics in a country where distinction is a pillory! But I could not live here. It is my misfortune that my tastes are so modified by that long and compulsory exile that life here would be a perpetual penance. This unmixt air of merchandise suffocates me. Our own home is tintured black with it. You yourself, in this rural Paradise you have conjured up, move in it like a cloud. The counting-house rings in your voice, calculation draws together your brows, you look on everything as a *means* and know its cost; and the calm and means-forgetting *fruition* which forms the charm and dignity of superior life is utterly unknown to you. What would be my happiness with such a wife? What would be yours with such a husband? Yet I consider the incompatibility between us as no advantage on my part; on the contrary, a punishment, and of your inflicting. What shall I be, anywhere, but a Tantalus—a fastidious *ennuyé*, with a thirst for the inaccessible burning in my bosom continually!

"I pray you let us avoid another meeting before my departure. Though I cannot forgive you as a lover, I can think of you with pleasure as a cousin, and I give you, as your due, ('damages,' the law would phrase it,) the portion of myself which you thought most important when I offered you my all. You would not take me without the fortune, but perhaps you will be content with the fortune without me. I shall immediately take steps to convey to you this property of Revedere, with an income sufficient to maintain it, and I trust soon to hear that you have found a husband better worthy of you than your cousin—

"PHILIP BALLISTER."

LIGHT VERVAIN.

"And thou, too, light vervain,—thou next come, after
Provoking souls to mirth and easy laughter."—*Old Somebody*.

ROME, May 30, 1832.

DINED with F—, the artist, at a *trattoria*. F— is a man of genius, very adventurous and imaginative in his art, but never caring to show the least touch of these qualities in his conversation. His pictures have given him great vogue and consideration at Rome, so that his daily experience furnishes staple enough for his evening's chit-chat, and he seems, of course, to be always taking of himself. He is very generally set down as an egotist. His impulse to talk, however, springs from no wish for self-glorification, but rather from an indolent aptness to lay hands on the readiest and most familiar topic, and that is a kind of egotism to which I have very little objection—particularly with the mind fatigued, as it commonly is in Rome, by a long day's study of works of art.

I had passed the morning at the Barberini palace with a party of picture-hunters, and I made some remark as to the variety of impressions made upon the minds of different people by the same picture. *Apropos* of this remark, F— told me a little anecdote, which I must try to put down by way of a new shoal in the chart of human nature.

"It is very much the same with everything else," said F—; "no two people see with the same eyes, physically or morally; and faith, we might save ourselves a great deal of care and bother, if we did but keep it in mind."

"As how?" I asked, for I saw that this vague remark was premonitory of an illustration.

"I think I introduced young Skyring to you at a party somewhere?"

"A youth with a gay waistcoat and nothing to say? Yes."

"Well—your observation just now reminded me of the different estimate put by that gentleman and myself upon something, and if I could give you any idea of my month's work in his behalf, you would agree with me that I might have spared myself some trouble—keeping in mind, as I said before, the difference in optics.

"I was copying a bit of foreshortening from a picture in the Vatican, one day, when this youth passed out without observing me. I did not immediately recollect him. He was dressed like a figure in a tailor's window, and, with Mrs. Stark in his hand, was hunting up the pictures marked with four notes of admiration; and I, with a smile at the waxy dandyism of the man, turned to my work and forgot him. Presently his face recurred to me, or rather his sister's face, which some family likeness had insensibly recalled, and, getting another look, I recognised in him an old, though not very intimate playmate of my boyish days. It immediately occurred to me that I could serve him a very good turn by giving him the *entrée* to society here, and quite as immediately, it occurred to me to doubt whether it were worth my while."

"And what changed your mind," I asked, "for of course you came to the conclusion that it was not?"

"Oh, for his sake alone I should have left him as he was, a hermit in his varnished boots—for he had not an acquaintance in the city—but Kate Skyring had given me roses when roses were to me each a world; and for her sake, though I was a rejected lover, I thought better of my demurrer. Then I had a little pique to gratify—for the Skyings had rather given me the *de haut en bas* in declining the honour of my alliance (lucky for me, since it brought me here, and made me what I am), and I was not indisposed to show that the power to serve, to say the least, was now on my side."

"Two sufficient, as well as dramatic reasons for being civil to a man."

"Only arrived at, however, by a night's deliberation, for it cost me some trouble of thought and memory to get back into my chrysalis and imagine myself at all subject to people so much below my present vogue—whatever that is worth! Of course I don't think of Kate in this comparison, for a woman one has once loved is below nothing. We'll drink her health, God bless her!"

(A bottle of Lagrima.)

"I left my card on Mr. Skyring the next morning, with a note enclosing three or four invitations which I had been at some trouble to procure, and a hope from myself of the honour of his company to a quiet dinner. He took it as a statue would take a shower-bath, wrote me a note in the

third person in reply to mine in the first, and came in ball-dress and sulphur gloves at precisely the canonical fifteen minutes past the hour. Good old Thorwaldsen dined with me, and an English viscount for whom I was painting a picture, and between my talking Italian to the venerable sculptor, and Skyring's belording and belordshipping the good-natured nobleman, the dinner went trippingly off—the Little Peddlington of our mutual nativity furnishing less than its share to the conversation.

"We drove, all together, to the Palazzo Rossi, for it was the night of the Marchesa's *soirée*. As sponsor, I looked with some satisfaction at Skyring in the ante-room, his toggery being quite unexceptionable, and his *maintien* very uppish and assured. I presented him to our fair hostess, who surveyed him as he approached with a satisfactory look of approval, and no one else chancing to be near, I left him to improve what was rather a rare opportunity—a *tête-à-tête* with the prettiest woman in Rome. Five minutes after, I returned to reconnoitre, and there he stood, stroking down his velvet waistcoat, and looking from the carpet to the ceiling, while the marchioness was quite red with embarrassment and vexation. He had not opened his lips! She had tried him in French and Italian (the dunce had told me that he spoke French too), and finally she had ventured upon English, which she knew very little of, and still he neither spoke nor ran away!

"‘Perhaps Monsieur would like to dance,’ said the marchioness, gliding away from him with a look of inexpressible relief, and trusting to me to find him a partner.

"‘I had no difficulty in finding him a partner, for (that far) his waistcoat ‘put him on velvet’—but I could not trust him alone again; so, having presented him to a very pretty woman and got them *vis-à-vis* in the quadrille, I stood by to supply the short comings. And little of a sinecure it was! The man had nothing to say; nor, confound him! had he any embarrassment on the subject. He looked at his varnished pumps, and coaxed his coat to his waist, and set back his neck like a goose bolting a grasshopper, and took as much interest in the conversation as a footman behind your chair—deaf and dumb apparently, but perfectly at his ease. He evidently had no idea that there was any distinction between men except in dress, and was persuaded that he was entirely successful as

far as he had gone: and, as to my efforts in his behalf, he clearly took them as gratuitous on my part—probably thinking, from the difference in our exteriors, that I had paid myself in the glory of introducing him.

“Well—I had begun so liberally that I could scarce refuse to find my friend another partner, and, after that, another and another—I, to avoid the odium of inflicting a bore on my fair acquaintances, feeling compelled to continue my service as chorus in the pantomime—and, you will scarce believe me when I tell you that I submitted to this bore nightly for a month! I could not get rid of him. He would not be let go. Without offending him mortally, and so undoing all my sentimental outlay for Kate Skyring and her short-sighted papa, I had nothing for it but to go on till he should go off—ridden to death with him in every conceivable variety of bore.”

“And he is gone?”

“Gone. And now, what thanks do you suppose I got for all this?”

“A present of a pencil-case?”

“No, indeed! but a lesson in human nature that will stick by me much longer. He called at my studio yesterday morning to say good-bye. Through all my sense of his boredom and relief at the prospect of being rid of him, I felt embarrassed when he came in, thinking how difficult it would be for him to express properly his sense of the obligation he was under to me. After half an hour’s monologue (by myself) on pictures, &c., he started up and said he must go. ‘And by-the-by,’ said he, colouring a little, ‘there is one thing I want to say to you, Mr. F—! Hang it, it has stuck in my throat ever since I met you! You’ve been very polite and I’m obliged to you, of course—but *I don’t like your devilish patronizing manner!* Good-bye, Mr. F—!’”

* * * * *

The foregoing is a leaf from a private diary which I kept at Rome. In making a daily entry of such passing stuff as interests us, we sometimes, amid much that should be ticketed for oblivion, record that which has a bearing, important or amusing, on the future; and a late renewal of my acquaintance with Mr. F—, followed by a knowledge of some fortunate changes in his worldly condition, has given that interest to this otherwise unimportant scrap of diary which will be

made apparent presently to the reader. A vague recollection that I had something in an old book which referred to him, induced me to look it up, and I was surprised to find that I had noted down, in this trifling anecdote, what turned out to be the mainspring of his destiny.

F—— returned to his native country after five years' study of the great masters of Italy. His first pictures painted at Rome procured for him, as is stated in the diary I have quoted, a high reputation. He carried with him a style of his own, which was merely stimulated and heightened by his first year's walk through the galleries of Florence, and the originality and boldness in his manner of colouring seemed to promise a sustained novelty of the art. Gradually, however, the awe of the great masters seemed to overshadow his confidence in himself, and, as he travelled and deepened his knowledge of painting, he threw aside feature after feature of his own peculiar style, till at last he fell into the track of the great army of imitators, who follow the immortals of the Vatican as doomed ships follow the Flying Dutchman.

Arrived at home, and depending solely on his art for a subsistence, F—— commenced the profession to which he had served so long an apprenticeship. But his pictures sadly disappointed his friends. After the first specimens of his acquired style in the annual exhibitions, the calls at his rooms became fewer and farther between, and his best works were returned from the galleries unsold. Too proud to humour the popular taste by returning to what he considered an inferior stage of his art, he stood still with his reputation ebbing from him, and as his means, of course, depended on the tide of public favour, he was soon involved in troubles before which his once-brilliant hopes rapidly faded.

At this juncture he received the following letter:—

"You will be surprised on glancing at the signature to this letter. You will be still more surprised when you are reminded that it is a reply to an unanswered one of your own—written years ago. That letter lies by me, expressed with all the diffidence of boyish feeling. And it seems as if its diffidence would encourage me in what I wish to say. Yet I write far more tremblingly than you could have done.

"Let me try to prepare the way by some explanation of the past.

"You were my first lover. I was not forbidden, at four-

teen, to express the pleasure I felt at your admiration, and you cannot have forgotten the ardour and simplicity with which I returned it. I remember giving you roses better than I remember anything so long ago. Now—writing to you with the same feeling warm at my heart—it seems to me as if it needed but a rose, could I give it you in the same garden, to make us lovers again. Yet I know you must be changed. I scarce know whether I should go on with this letter.

“But I owe you reparation. I owe you an answer to this which lies before me; and, if I err in answering it as my heart burns to do, you will at least be made happier by knowing that when treated with neglect and repulsion, you were still beloved.

“I think it was not long before the receipt of this letter that my father first spoke to me of our attachment. Till then I had only thought of loving you. That you were graceful and manly, that your voice was sweet, and that your smile made me happy, was all I could have told of you without reflection. I had never reasoned upon your qualities of mind, though I had taken an unconscious pride in your superiority to your companions, and least of all had I asked myself whether those abilities for making your way in the world, which my father denied you, were among your boyish energies. With a silent conviction that you had no equal among your companions, in anything, I listened to my father's disparagement of you, bewildered and overawed—the very novelty and unexpectedness of the light in which he spoke of you, sealing my lips completely. Perhaps resistance to his will would have been of no avail, but, had I been better prepared to reason upon what he urged, I might have expressed to you the unwillingness of my acquiescence. I was prevented from seeing you till your letter came, and then all intercourse with you was formally forbidden. My father said he would himself reply to your proposal. But it was addressed to me, and I have only recovered possession of it by his death.

“Though it may seem like reproaching you for yielding me without an effort, I must say, to complete the history of my own feelings, that I nursed a vague hope of hearing from you until your departure for Italy, and that this hope was extinguished not without bitter tears. The partial resentment that mingled with this unhappiness aided me doubtless in

making up my mind to forget you, and for a while, for years I may say, I was possessed by other excitements and feelings. It is strange, however, that, though scarce remembering you when waking, I still saw you perpetually in my dreams.

"And, so far, this is a cold and easy recital. How shall I describe to you the next change, the re-awakening of this smothered and slumbering affection! How shall I evade your contempt when I tell you that it awoke with your renown! But my first feeling was not one of love. When your name began to come to us in the letters of travellers and in the rumour of literary circles, I felt as if something that belonged to me was praised and honoured: a pride, an exulting and gratified pride, that feeling seemed to be, as if the heart of my childhood had been staked on your aspirations, and was borne up with you, a part and a partaker of your fame. With all my soul I drank in the news of your success in the art; I wrote to those who came home from Italy; I questioned those likely to have heard of you, as critics and connoisseurs; I devoted all my reading to the literature of the arts, and the history of painters, for my life was poured into yours irresistibly, by a power I could not, and cannot now control. My own imagination turned painter, indeed, for I lived on reverie, calling up, with endless variations, pictures of yourself amid the works of your pencil, visited and honoured as I knew you were, yet unchanged in the graceful and boyish beauty I remembered. I was proud of having loved you, of having been the object of the earliest and purest preference of a creature of genius; and through this pride, supplanting and overflowing it, crept and strengthened a warmer feeling, the love I have the hardihood to avow. Oh! what will you think of this boldness! Yet to conceal my love were now a severer task than to wait the hazard of your contempt.

"One explanation—a palliative, perhaps, you will allow it to be, if you are generous—remains to be given. The immediate impulse of this letter was information from my brother, long withheld, of your kindness to him in Rome. From some perverseness which I hardly understand, he has never before hinted in my presence that he had seen you in Italy; and it was only by needing it as an illustration of some feeling which seemed to have piqued him, and which he was expressing to a friend, that he gave the particulars of your month of devo-

tion to him. Knowing the difference between your characters, and the entire want of sympathy between your pursuits and my brother's, to what motive could I attribute your unusual and self-sacrificing kindness?

"Did I err—was I presumptuous, in believing that it was from a forgiving and tender memory of myself?

"You are prepared now, if you can be, for what I would say. We are left alone, my brother and I, orphan heirs to the large fortune of my father. I have no one to control my wishes, no one's permission to ask for any disposition of my hand and fortune. Will you have them? In this question is answered the sweet, and long-treasured, though long-neglected letter, lying beside me.

"KATHERINE SKYRING."

Mrs. F—, as will be seen from the style of her letter, is a woman of decision and cleverness; and of such a helpmate, in the way of his profession as well as in the tender relations of life, F— was sorely in need. By her common-sense counsels and persuasions, he has gone back, with his knowledge of the art, to the first lights of his own powerful genius; and with means to command leisure and experiment, he is, without submitting the process to the world, perfecting a manner which will more than redeem his early promise.

As his career, though not very uncommon or dramatic, hinged for its more fortunate events on an act of high-spirited politeness, I have thought that, in this age of departed chivalry, the story was worth preserving for its lesson.

BROWN'S DAY WITH THE MIMPSONS.

WE got down from an omnibus in Charing-Cross.

"Sovereign or farthing?" said the cad, rubbing the coin between his thumb and finger.

"Sovereign of course!" said B—— confidently, pocketing the change which the man had ready for the emergency in a bit of brown paper.

It was a muggy, misty, London twilight. I was coming up to town from Blackheath, and in the crowded vehicle had chanced to encounter my compatriot B—— (call it Brown), who had been lionizing the Thames Tunnel. In the course of conversation, it came out that we were both on the town for our dinner; and as we were both guests at the Travellers'

Club, we had pulled the omnibus-string at the nearest point, and after the brief dialogue recorded above, strolled together down Pall-Mall.

As we sat waiting for our fish, one of us made a remark as to the difference of *feel* between gold and copper coin; and Brown, fishing in his pocket for money to try the experiment, discovered that the doubt of the cad was well founded, for he had unconsciously passed a farthing for a sovereign.

"People are very apt to take your coin at your own valuation!" said Brown, with a smile of some meaning; "and when they are in the dark as to your original coinage (as the English are with regard to Americans abroad), it is as easy to pass for gold as for copper. Indeed you may pass for both in a day, as I have lately had experience. Remind me presently to tell you how. Here comes the fried sole, and it's troublesome talking when there are bones to fight shy of—the '*flow of sole*' to the contrary notwithstanding."

I will take advantage of the *hiatus* to give the reader a slight idea of my friend, as a preparation for his story.

Brown was the "mirror of courtesy." He was also the mirror of vulgarity. And he was the *mirror* of everything else. He had that facility of adaptation to the society he was in, which made him seem born for that society, and that only; and without calculation or forethought—by an unconscious instinct, indeed—he cleverly reflected the man and manners before him. The result was a popularity of a most varied quality. Brown was a man of moderate fortune and no profession. He had travelled for some years on the continent, and had encountered all classes of Englishmen, from peers to green-grocers; and as he had a visit to England in prospect, he seldom parted from the most chance acquaintance without a volunteer of letters of introduction, exchange of addresses, and similar tokens of having "pricked through his castle wall." When he did arrive in London, at last, it was with a budget like the postman's on Valentine's day; and he had only to deliver one letter in a score to be put on velvet in any street or square within the bills of mortality. Sagacious enough to know that the gradations of English society have the facility of a cat's back (smooth enough from the head downwards), he began with a most noble duke, and at the date of his introduction to the reader, was on the dinner-list of most of the patricians of May Fair.

Presuming that you see your man, dear reader, let us come at once to the removal of the cloth.

"As I was calling myself to account, the other day, over my breakfast," said Brown, filling his glass and pushing the bottle, "it occurred to me that my round of engagements required some little variation. There's a '*toujours perdrix*,' even among lords and ladies, particularly when you belong as much to their sphere, and are as likely to become a part of it, as the fly revolving in aristocratic dust on the wheel of my lord's carriage. I thought, perhaps, I had better see some other sort of people.

"I had, under a *presse-papier* on the table, about a hundred letters of introduction—the condemned remainder, after the selection, by advice, of four or five only. I determined to cut this heap like a pack of cards, and follow up the trump.

"*John Mimpson, Esq., House of Mimpson and Phipps, Mark Lane, London.*"

"The gods had devoted me to the acquaintance of Mr. (and probably Mrs.) John Mimpson. After turning over a deal of rubbish in my mind, I remembered that the letter had been given me five years before by an American merchant—probably the correspondent of the firm in Mark Lane. It was a sealed letter, and said in brackets on the back, '*Introducing Mr. Brown.*' I had a mind to give it up and cut again, for I could not guess on what footing I was introduced, nor did I know what had become of the writer; nor had I a very clear idea how long a letter of recommendation will hold its virtue. It struck me again that these difficulties rather gave it a zest, and I would abide by the oracle. I dressed, and as the day was fine started to stroll leisurely through the Strand and Fleet Street, and look into the shop-windows on my way; assuring myself, at least, thus much of diversion in my adventure.

"Somewhere about two o'clock, I left daylight behind, and plunged into Mark Lane. Up one side and down the other—"Mimpson and Co." at last, on a small brass plate, set in a green baize door. With my unbuttoned coat nearly wiped off my shoulder by the strength of the pulley, I shoved through, and emerged in a large room, with twenty or thirty clerks perched on high stools, like monkeys in a menagerie.

"'First door right!' said the nearest man, without raising his eyes from the desk, in reply to my inquiry for Mr. Mimpson.

"I entered a closet, lighted by a slanting skylight, in which at my man.

"'Mr. John Mimpson?'

"'Mr. John Mimpson!'

"After this brief dialogue of accost, I produced my letter, and had a second's leisure to examine my new friend while he ran his eye over the contents. He was a rosy, well-conditioned, tight-skinned little man, with black hair, and looked like a pear on a chair. (Hang the bothering rhymes!) His legs were completely hid under the desk, so that the ascending eye began with his equatory line, and whether he had no shoulders or no neck, I could not well decide; but it was a tolerably smooth plane from his seat to the top curl of his sinciput. He was scrupulously well dressed, and had that highly washed look which marks the city man in London—bent on not betraying his 'diggins' by his complexion.

"I answered Mr. Mimpson's inquiries about our mutual friend with rather a hazardous particularity, and assured him he was quite well (I have since discovered that he has been dead three years), and conversation warmed between us for ten minutes, till we were ready to part sworn friends. I rose to go, and the merchant seemed very much perplexed.

"'To-morrow,' said he, rubbing the two great business bumps over his eyebrows—no—yes—that is to say, Mrs. Mimpson—well, it *shall* be to-morrow! Can you come out to Rose Lodge, and spend the day to-morrow?'

"'With great pleasure,' said I, for I was determined to follow my trump letter to extremities.

"'Mrs. Mimpson,' he went on to say, as he wrote down the geography of Rose Lodge—'Mrs. Mimpson expects some friends to-morrow—indeed, some of her very choice friends. If you come early, you will see more of her than if you just save your dinner. Bring your carpet-bag, of course, and stay over night. Lunch at two—dine at seven. I can't be there to receive you myself, but I will prepare Mrs. Mimpson to save you all trouble of introduction. Hampstead Road. Good morning, my dear sir.'

"So I am in for a suburban bucolic, thought I, as I regained daylight in the neighbourhood of the Mansion House.

"It turned out a beautiful day, sunny and warm: and had I been sure of my navigation, and sure of my disposition to stay all night, I should have gone out by the Hampstead

coach, and made the best of my way, carpet-bag in hand. I went into Newman's for a postchaise, however, and, on showing him the written address, was agreeably surprised to find he knew Rose Lodge. His boys had all been there.

"Away I went through the Regent's Park, behind the blood-posters, blue jacket and white hat; and somewhere about one o'clock mounted Hampstead Hill, and in ten minutes thence was at my destination. The postboy was about driving in at the open gate, but I dismounted and sent him back to the inn to leave his horses; and then, depositing my bag at the porter's lodge, walked up the avenue. It was a much finer place, altogether, than I expected to see.

"Mrs. Mimpson was in the garden. The dashing footman who gave me the information led me through a superb drawing-room, and out at a glass door upon the lawn, and left me to make my own way to the lady's presence.

"It was a delicious spot, and I should have been very glad to ramble about by myself till dinner; but, at a turn in the grand walk, I came suddenly upon two ladies.

"I made my bow, and begged leave to introduce myself as 'Mr. Brown.'

"With a very slight inclination of the head, and no smile whatever, one of the ladies asked me if I had walked from town, and begged her companion (without introducing me to her) to show me in to lunch. The spokester was a stout and tall woman, who had rather an aristocratic nose, and was not handsome; but, to give her her due, she had made a narrow escape of it. She was dressed very showily, and evidently had great pretensions; but, that she was not at all glad to see Mr. Brown, was as apparent as was at all necessary. As the other and younger lady who was to accompany me, however, was very pretty, though dressed very plainly, and had, withal, a look in her eye which assured me she was amused with my unwelcome apparition, I determined, as I should not otherwise have done, to stay it out, and accepted her convoy with submissive civility—very much inclined, however, to be impudent to somebody, somehow.

"The lunch was on a tray in a side room, and I rang the bell and ordered a bottle of champagne. The servant looked surprised, but brought it, and meantime I was getting through the weather, and the other common-places, and the lady, say-

ing little, was watching me very calmly. I liked her looks, however, and was sure she was not a Mimpson.

" 'Hand this to Miss Armstrong,' said I to the footman, pouring out a glass of champagne.

" 'Miss Bellamy, you mean, sir.'

" I rose and bowed, and, with as grave a courtesy as I could command, expressed my pleasure at my first introduction to Miss Bellamy—through Thomas, the footman! Miss Bellamy burst into a laugh, and was pleased to compliment my American manners, and in ten minutes we were a very merry pair of friends, and she accepted my arm for a stroll through the grounds, carefully avoiding the frigid neighbourhood of Mrs. Mimpson.

" Of course I set about picking Miss Bellamy's brains for what information I wanted. She turned out quite the nicest creature I had seen in England—fresh, joyous, natural, and clever; and, as I was delivered over to her bodily, by her keeper and feeder, she made no scruple of promenading me through the grounds till the dressing bell—four of the most agreeable hours I have to record in my travels.

" By Miss Bellamy's account, my advent that day was looked upon by Mrs. Mimpson as an enraging calamity. Mrs. Mimpson was, herself, fourth cousin to a Scotch lord, and the plague of her life was the drawback to the gentility of her parties in Mimpson's mercantile acquaintance. She had married the little man for his money, and had thought, by living out of town, to choose her own society, with her husband for her only incumbrance; but Mimpson vowed that he should be ruined in Mark Lane, if he did not house and dine his mercantile fraternity and their envoys at Rose Lodge, and they had at last compromised the matter. No Yankee clerk, or German agent, or person of any description, defiled by trade, was to be invited to the Lodge without a three days' premonition to Mrs. Mimpson, and no additions were to be made, whatever, by Mr. M., to Mrs. M.'s dinners, soirées, matinées, archery parties, suppers, déjeûners, tableaux, or private theatricals. This holy treaty, Mrs. Mimpson presumed, was written 'with a gad of steel on a leaf of brass'—inviolable as her cousin's coat-of-arms.

" But there was still 'Ossa on Pelion.' The dinner of that day had a diplomatic aim. Miss Mimpson (whom I had not yet seen) was ready to 'come out,' and her mother had

embarked her whole soul in the enterprise of bringing about that *début* at Almack's. Her best card was a certain Lady S——, who chanced to be passing a few days in the neighbourhood, and this dinner was in *her* honour—the company chosen to impress *her* with the exclusiveness of the Mimpson's, and the prayer for her ladyship's influence (to procure vouchers from one of the patronesses) was to be made, when she was 'dieted to their request.' And all had hitherto worked to a charm. Lady S—— had accepted—Ude had sent his best cook from Crockford's—the Belgian *chargé* and a Swedish *attaché* were coming—the day was beautiful, and the Lodge was sitting for its picture; and, on the very morning, when every chair at the table was ticketed and devoted, what should Mr. Mimpson do, but send back a special messenger from the city, to say that he had forgotten to mention to Mrs. M. at breakfast, that he had invited Mr. Brown. Of course he had *forgotten* it, though it would have been as much as his eyes were worth to mention it in person to Mrs. Mimpson.

"To this information, which I give you in a lump, but which came to light in the course of rather a desultory conversation, Miss Bellamy thought I had some title, from the rudeness of my reception. It was given in the shape of a very clever banter, it is true, but she was evidently interested to set me right with regard to Mr. Mimpson's good intentions in my behalf, and, as far as that and her own civilities would do it, to apologise for the inhospitality of Rose Lodge. Very kind of the girl—for I was passing, recollect, at a most ha'penny valuation.

"I had made some casual remark touching the absurdity of Almack's aspirations in general, and Mrs. Mimpson's in particular, and my fair friend, who of course fancied an Almack's ticket as much out of Mr. Brown's reach as the horn of the new moon, took up the defence of Mrs. Mimpson on that point, and undertook to dazzle my untutored imagination by a picture of this seventh heaven—as she had heard it described—for, to herself, she freely confessed, it was not even within the limits of dreamland. I knew this was true of herself, and thousands of highly-educated and charming girls of England; but still, looking at her while she spoke, and seeing what an ornament she would be to any ballroom in the world, I realized, with more repugnance than I had ever felt before, the

arbitrary barriers of fashion and aristocracy. As accident had placed me in a position to 'look on the reverse of the shield,' I determined, if possible, to let Miss Bellamy judge of its colour with the same advantage. It is not often that a plebeian like myself has the authority to

" 'Bid the pebbles on the hungry beach
Fillip the stars.'

" We were near the open window of the library, and I stepped in and wrote a note to Lady — (one of the lady patronesses, and the kindest friend I have in England), asking for three vouchers for the next ball. I had had occasion once or twice before to apply for similar favours, for countrywomen of my own, passing through London on their travels, and I knew that her ladyship thought no more of granting them than of returning bows in Hyde Park. I did not name the ladies for whom the three tickets were intended, wishing to reserve the privilege of handing one to Miss Mimpson, should she turn out civil and presentable. The third, of course, was to Miss Bellamy's chaperon, whoever that might be, and the party *might* be extended to a quartette by the 'Monsieur De Trop' of the hour—*cela selon*. Quite a dramatic plot—wasn't it?

" I knew that Lady — was not very well, and would be found at home by the messenger (my post-boy), and there was time enough between soup and coffee to go to London and back, even without the spur in his pocket.

" The bell rang, and Miss Bellamy took herself off to dress. I went to my carpet bag in the bachelor quarters of the house, and through a discreet *entretien* with the maid who brought me hot water, became somewhat informed as to my fair friend's position in the family. She was the daughter of a gentleman who had seen better days. They lived in a retired cottage in the neighbourhood; and, as Miss Bellamy and a younger sister were both very highly accomplished, they were usually asked to the Lodge, whenever there was company to be entertained with their music.

" I was early in the drawing-room, and found there Mrs. Mimpson and a tall dragoon of a young lady I presumed to be her daughter. She did not introduce me. I had hardly achieved my salutary *salaam* when Miss Bellamy came in opportunely, and took me off their hands, and, as they addressed no conversation to us, we turned over music, and chatted in the corner while the people came in. It was twilight in the

reception-room, and I hoped, by getting on the same side of the table with Lady S—— (whom I had the honour of knowing), to escape recognizance till we joined the ladies in the drawing-room after dinner. As the guests arrived, they were formally introduced to Miss Mimpson by the mother, and everybody but myself was formally presented to Lady S——, the exception not noticeable, of course, among thirty people. Mr. Mimpson came late from the city, possibly anxious to avoid a skirmish on the subject of his friend Brown, and he entered the room barely in time to hand Lady S—— in to dinner.

"My tactics were ably seconded by my unconscious ally. I placed myself in such a position at table, that, by a little management, I kept Miss Bellamy's head between me and Lady S——, and my name was not so remarkable as to draw attention to me when called on to take wine with the peccant spouse of the Scotch lord's cousin. Meantime I was very charmingly entertained; Miss Bellamy not having, at all, the fear of Mrs. Mimpson before her eyes, and apparently finding the Yankee supercargo, or cotton clerk, or whatever he might be, quite worth trying her hand upon. The provender was good, and the wine was enough to verify the Apocrypha—at least for the night—'a man remembering neither sorrow nor debt' with such glorious claret.

"As I was *vis-d-vis* to Miss Mimpson, and only two plates removed from her mother, I was within reach of some syllable or some civility, and one would have thought that good breeding might exact some slight notice for the devil himself, under one's own roof by invitation; but the large eyes of Miss Aurelia and her mamma passed over me as if I had on the invisible ring of Gyges. I wonder, by the way, whether the ambitious youths who go to London and Paris with samples, and come back and sport 'the complete varnish of a man' acquired in foreign society—I wonder whether they take these rubs to be part of their polishing!

"The ladies rose and left us, and as I had no more occasion to dodge heads or trouble myself with humility, I took Lady S——'s place at old Mimpson's right hand, and was immediately recognized with great *empressement* by the Belgian *chargé*, who had met me 'very often, in very agreeable society.' Mimpson stared, and evidently took it for a bit of flummery or a mistake; but he presently stared again, for the butler came

in with a coronetted note on his silver tray, and the seal side up, and presented it to me with a most deferential bend of his white coat. I felt the vouchers within, and pocketted it without opening, and we soon after rose, and went to the drawing-room for our coffee.

"Lady S—— sat with her back to the door, besieged by Mrs. Mimpson; and, at the piano, beside Miss Bellamy, who was preparing to play, stood one of the loveliest young creatures possible to fancy. A pale and high-bred looking lady in widow's weeds sat near them, and I had no difficulty in making out who were the after-dinner additions to the party. I joined them, and was immediately introduced by Miss Bellamy to her mother and sister, with whom (after a brilliant duet by the sisters) I strolled out upon the lawn for an hour; for it was a clear night, and the moon and soft air almost took me back to Italy. And (perhaps by a hint from Miss Bellamy) I was allowed to get on very expeditiously in my acquaintance with her mother and sister.

"My new friends returned to the drawing-room, and, as the adjoining library was lighted, I went in and filled up the blank vouchers with the names of Mrs. Bellamy and her daughters. I listened a moment to the conversation in the next room. The subject was Almack's, and was discussed with great animation. Lady S——, who seemed to me trying to escape the trap they had baited for her, was quietly setting forth the difficulties of procuring vouchers, and recommending to Mrs. Mimpson not to subject herself to the mortification of a refusal. Old Mimpson backed up this advice with a stout approval, and this brought Mrs. Mimpson out 'horse and foot,' and she declared that she would submit to anything, do anything, give anything, rather than fail in this darling object of her ambition. She would feel under eternal inexpressible obligations to any friend who would procure, for herself and daughter, admission for but one night to Almack's.

"And then came in the sweet voice of Miss Bellamy, who 'knew it was both wrong and silly, but she would give ten years of her life to go to one of Almack's balls, and, in a long conversation she had had with Mr. Brown on the subject that morning ——'

"'Ah!' interrupted Lady S——, 'if it had been *the* Mr. Brown, you would have had very little trouble about it.'

"'And who is *the* Mr. Brown?' asked Mrs. Mimpson.

“ ‘The pet and *protégé* of the only lady patroness I do not visit,’ said Lady S——, ‘and unluckily, too, the only one who thinks the vouchers great rubbish, and gives them away without thought or scruple.’

“ At that moment I entered the room.

“ ‘Good heavens!’ screamed Lady S——, ‘is that his ghost? Why, Mr. Brown,’ she gasped, giving me her hand very cautiously, ‘do you appear when you are talked of, like—like—like—’

“ ‘Like the devil? No! But I am here in the body, and very much at your ladyship’s service,’ said I, ‘for of course you are going to the Duke’s to-night, and so am I. Will you take me with you, or shall my *po-sha* follow where I belong—in your train?’

“ ‘I’ll take you, of course,’ said her ladyship, rising, ‘but first about these vouchers. You have just come, and didn’t hear our discussion. Mrs. Mimpson is extremely anxious that her daughter should come out at Almack’s, and, as I happened to say, the moment before you entered, you are the very person to procure the tickets from Lady ——. How *very* odd that you should come in just then! But tell us—can you?’

“ A dead silence followed the question. Mrs. Mimpson sat with her eyes on the floor, the picture of dismay and mortification. Miss Mimpson blushed, and twisted her handkerchief, and Miss Bellamy looked at her hostess, half amused, and half distressed.

“ I handed the three vouchers to Miss Bellamy, and begged her acceptance of them, and then, turning to Lady S——, without waiting for a reply, regretted that, not having had the pleasure of being presented to Miss Mimpson, I had not felt authorised to include her in my effort to oblige Miss Bellamy.

“ And, what with old Mimpson’s astonishment, and Lady S——’s immediate tact in covering, by the bustle of departure, what she did not quite understand, though she knew it was some awkward *contre-temps* or other, I found time to receive Miss Bellamy’s thanks, and get permission from the mother to call and arrange this unexpected party, and, in ten minutes, I was on my way to London with Lady S——, amusing her almost into fits, with my explanations of the Mimpson mystery.

"Lady S—— was to be still at Hampstead for a few days, and, at my request, she called with me on the Bellamys, and invited the girls up to town. Rose Bellamy, the younger, is at this moment one of the new stars of the season accordingly, and Miss Bellamy and I carry on the war, weekly, at Almack's, and nightly at some wax-light paradise or other, and Lady S—— has fallen in love with them both, and treats them like daughters.

"So you see, though I passed for a farthing with the Mimpsons, I turned out a sovereign to the Bellamys.

"Pass the bottle!"

MR. AND MRS. FOLLETT;

OR, THE DANGERS OF MEDDLING WITH MARRIED PEOPLE.

THERE are two commodities, much used by gentlemen, neither of which will bear tinkering or tampering with—matrimony and patent leather. Their necessities are fair weather and untroubled wear and tear. Ponder on the following melancholy example!

My friend Follett married a lady, contrary to my advice. I gave the advice contrary to my wont and against my will. He would have it. The lady was a tolerably pretty woman, on whose original destiny it was never written that she should be a belle. How she became one is not much matter; but nature being thoroughly taken by surprise with her success, had neglected to provide the counterpoise. I say it is no great matter how she became a belle—nor is it—for, if such things were to be accounted for to the satisfaction of the sex, the world have little time for other speculations; but I will devote a single paragraph to the elucidation of this one of many mysteries, for a reason I have. *Fenam habet in cornu.*

Poets are the least fastidious, and the least discriminating of men, in their admiration of women (*vide Byron*), partly because their imagination, like sunshine, glorifies all that turns to it, without which they were not poets, is both indolent and imperial, from both causes waiting alway to be sought. In some circles, bards are rather comets than stars, and the one whose orbit for a few days intersected that of Miss Adele Burnham, was the exclusive marvel of the hour. Like other poets, the one of which I speak was concentrative

in his attentions, and he chose (*why*, the gods knew better than the belles of the season) to have neither eyes nor ears, flowers, flatteries, nor verses, for any other than Miss Burnham. He went on his way, but the incense, in which he had enveloped the blest Adele, lingered like a magic atmosphere about her, and Tom Follett and all his tribe breathed it in blind adoration. I trust the fair reader has here nodded her head, in evidence that this history of the belleship of Miss Burnham is no less brief than natural and satisfactory.

When Follett came to me with the astounding information that he intended to propose to Miss Burnham (he had already proposed and been accepted, the traitor!) my fancy at once took the prophetic stride so natural on the first breaking of such news, and, in the five minutes which I took for reflection, I had travelled far into that land of few delusions—holy matrimony. Before me, in all the changeful variety of a magic mirror, came and went the many phases of which that multi-form creature, woman, is susceptible. I saw her in diamonds and satin, and in kitchen-apron and curl papers; in delight, and in the dumps; in supplication, and in resistance; shod like a fairy in French shoes, and slip-shod (as perhaps fairies are, too, in their bed-rooms and dairies). I saw her approaching the climacteric of age, and receding from it—a mother, a nurse, an invalid—mum over her breakfast, chatty over her tea—doing the honours at Tom's table, and mending, with sober diligence, Tom's straps and suspenders. The kaleidoscope of fancy exhausted its combination.

"Tom!" said I, looking up affectionately, for he was one of my weaknesses, was Tom, and I indulged myself in loving him without a reason, "Miss Burnham is in the best light where she is. If she cease to be a belle, as of course she will, should she marry ——"

"Of course!" interrupted Tom, very gravely.

"Well, in that case, she lays off the goddess, trust me! You will like her to dress plainly ——"

"Quite plain?"

"And, stripped of her plumage, your bird of Paradise would be nothing but a very indifferent hen—with the disadvantage of remembering that she had been a bird of Paradise."

"But it was not her dress that attracted the brilliant author of ——"

"Possibly not. But, as the false gods of mythology are only

known by their insignia, Jupiter by his thunderbolt, and Mercury by his talaria and caduceus, so a woman, worshipped by accident, will find a change of exterior nothing less than a laying aside of her divinity. That's a didactic sentence, but you will know what I mean, when I tell you that I, myself, cannot see a pair of coral ear-rings without a sickness of the heart, though the woman who once wore them, and who slighted me twenty years ago, sits before me in church, without diverting a thought from the sermon. Don't marry her, Tom!"

Six weeks after this conversation, I was at the wedding, and the reader will please to pass to the rear the six succeeding months—short time as it seems—to record a change in the bland sky of matrimony. It was an ellipse in our friendship as well; for advice (contrary to our wishes and intentions) is apt to be resented, and I fancied, from the northerly bows I received from Mrs. Follett, that my friend had made a merit to her of having married contrary to my counsel. At the end of this period Tom called on me.

Follett, I should have said, was a man of that undecided exterior which is perfectly at the mercy of a cravat or waistcoat. He looked "snob" or "nob," according to the care with which he had made his toilet. While a bachelor, of course, he could never afford, in public, a negligence or a mistake, and was invariably an elegant man, harmonious and "pin-point" from straps to whiskers. But alas! the security of wedded life! When Tom entered my room, I perused him as a walking homily. His coat, still made on the old measure, was buttoned only at the top, the waist being rather snug, and his waistcoat pockets loaded with the copper which in his gayer days he always left on the counter. His satin cravat was frayed and brownish with the tie slipped almost under his ear. The heel of his right boot (he trod straight on the other foot) almost looked him in the face. His pantaloons (the only article of dress in which there are no gradations—nothing, if not perfect) were bulged and strained. He wore a frightfully new hat, no gloves, and carried a baggy brown umbrella, which was, in itself, a most expressive portrait of "gone to seed." Tom entered with his usual uppish carriage, and, through the how-d'ye-dos, and the getting into his chair, carried off the old manner to a charm. In talking of the weather, a moment after, his eye fell on his stumpy umbrella, which, with an unconscious memory of an old affectation with

his cane, he was balancing on the toe of his boot, and the married look slid over him like a mist. Down went his head between his shoulders, and down went the corners of his mouth—down the inflation of his chest like a collapsed balloon; and down, in its youth and expression, it seemed to me, every muscle of his face. He had assumed in a minute the style and countenance of a man ten years older.

I smiled, how could I but smile!

"Then you have heard of it!" exclaimed, Tom, suddenly starting to his feet, and flushing purple to the roots of his hair.

"Heard of what?"

My look of surprise evidently took him aback; and, seating himself again with confused apologies, Tom proceeded to "make a clean breast," on a subject which I had not anticipated.

It seemed that, far from moulting her feathers after marriage, according to my prediction, Mrs. Follett clearly thought that she had not yet "strutted her hour," and, though everything Tom could wish, behind the curtain, in society she had flaunted and flirted, not merely with no diminution of zest from the wedding-day, but, her husband was of opinion, with a ratio alarmingly increasing. Her present alliance was with a certain Count Hautenbas, the lion of the moment, and though doubtless one in which vanity alone was active, Tom's sense of connubial propriety was at its last gasp. He could stand it no longer. He wished my advice in the choice between two courses. Should he call out the Frenchman, or should he take advantage of the law's construction of "moral insanity," and shut her up in a madhouse.

My advice had been of so little avail in the first instance, that I shrank from troubling Tom with any more of it, and certainly should have evaded it altogether, but for an experiment I wished to make, as much for my own satisfaction as for the benefit of that large class, the unhappy married.

"Your wife is out every night, I suppose, Tom?"

"Every night when she has no party at home."

"Do you go with her always?"

"I go *for* her usually; but the truth is, that since I married parties bore me, and, after seeing my wife off, I commonly smoke and snooze, or read, or run into Bob Thomas's and 'talk horse,' till I have just time to be in at the death."

"And when you get there you don't dance?"

"Not I, faith; I haven't danced since I was married!"

"But you used to be the best waltzer of the day."

"Well, the music sometimes gets into my heels now, but when I remember I am married the fit cools off. The deuce take it! a married man shouldn't be seen whirling round the room with a girl in his arms!"

"I presume that, were you still single, you would fancy your chance to be as good for ladies' favours as any French count's that ever came over?"

"Ehem! why—yes!"

Tom pulled up his collar.

"And if you had access to her society all day and all night and the Frenchman only an hour or two in the evening, any given lady being the object, you would bet freely on your own head?"

"I see your drift," said Tom, with a melancholy smile, "but it won't do!"

"No, indeed; it is what *would* have done. You had, at the start, a much better chance with your wife than Count Hautenbas; but husbands and lovers are the 'hare and the tortoise' of the fable. We must resort now to other means. Will you *follow* my advice as well as *take* it, should I be willing again to burn my fingers in your affairs?"

The eagerness of Tom's protestations quite made the *amende* to my mortified self-complacency, and I entered zealously into my little plot for his happiness. At this moment I heartily wish I had sent him and his affairs to the devil, and (lest I should forget it at the close of this tale) I here caution all men, single and double, against "meddling or making," marring or mending, in matrimonial matters. The alliteration may, perhaps, impress this salutary counsel on the mind of the reader.

I passed the remainder of the day in repairing the damage of Tom's person. I had his whiskers curled and trimmed even, (his left whisker was an inch nearer his nose than the right), and his teeth looked to by the dentist. I stood by, to be sure that there was no carelessness in his selection of patent leathers, and on his assuring me that he was otherwise well provided, I suffered him to go home to dress, engaging him to dine with me at seven.

He was punctual to the hour. By Jove I could scarce believe it was the same man. The consciousness of being

well dressed seemed to have brightened his eyes and lips, as it certainly changed altogether his address and movements. He had a narrow escape of being handsome. After all, it is only a "man of mark," or an Apollo, who can well afford to neglect the outer man; and a judicious negligence, or a judicious plainness, is probably worth the attention of both the man of mark and the Apollo. Tom was quite another order of creature—a butterfly that was just now a worm—and would have been treated with more consideration in consequence, even by those least tolerant of "the pomps and vanities." We dined temperately, and I superseded the bottle by a cup of strong green tea, at an early moment after the removal of the cloth, determined to have Tom's wits in as full dress as his person. Without being at all a brilliant man he was—the next best thing—a steady absorbent; and as most women are more fond of giving than receiving in all things, but particularly in conversation, I was not uneasy as to his power of making himself agreeable. Nor was *he*, faith!

The ball of the night was at the house of an old friend of my own, and Mr. and Mrs. Follett were but newly introduced to the circle. I had the company very clearly in my eye, therefore, while casting about for *dramatis personæ*, and fixing upon Mrs. Beverly Fairlie, for the prominent character, I assured success, though being very much in love with that coquettish widow myself, I had occasion for some self-denial in the matter. Of Mrs. Fairlie's weak points (on which it seemed necessary that I should enlighten Tom), I had information not to be acquired short of summering and wintering her, and, with my eye solely directed to its effect upon Mrs. Follett, I put the clues into my friend's hands in a long after-dinner conversation. As he seemed impatient to open the campaign after getting these definite and valuable instructions, I augured well for his success, and we entered the ball-room in high spirits.

It was quite enough to say to the mischievous widow that another woman was to be piqued by any attentions she might choose to pay Mr. Follett. Having said thus much and presented Tom, I sought out Mrs. Follett myself, with the double purpose of breaking up the monopoly of Mons. Hautenbas, and of directing her attention, should it be necessary, to the suavities between Tom and the widow.

It was a superb ball, and the music, as Tom said, went to the heels. The thing he did well was waltzing, and, after taking a turn or two with Mrs. Fairlie, the *rusée* dame ran up to Mrs. Follett with the most innocent air imaginable, and begged the loan of her husband for the rest of the evening! I did not half like the look of earnest with which she entered into the affair, indeed, and there was little need of my taking much trouble to enlighten Mrs. Follett, for a woman so surprised with a six months' husband I never saw. They were so capitally matched, Tom and the widow, in size, motion, style of waltzing, and all, that not we only, but the whole party, were occupied with observing and admiring them. Mrs. Follett and I (for a secret sympathy somehow drew us together as the thing went on) kept up a broken conversation, in which the Count was even less interested than we; and after a few ineffectual attempts to draw her into the tea-room, the Frenchman left us in pique, and we gave ourselves up to the observation of the couple who (we presumed) severally belonged to us. They carried on the war famously, to be sure! Mrs. Fairlie was a woman who could do as she liked, because she *would*; and she cared not a straw for the very *pronounced* demonstration of engrossing one man for all the quadrilles, waltzes, and gallopades, besides going with him to supper. Once or twice I tried to find an excuse for leaving Mrs. Follett to put in an oar for myself; but the little woman clung to me as if she had not the courage to undertake another person's amusement, and, new and sudden as the feeling must have been, she was pale and wretched, with a jealousy more bitter, probably, than mine. Tom never gave me a look after the first waltz; and as to the widow, she played her part with rather more zeal than we set down for her. I passed altogether an uncomfortable night, for a gay one, and it was a great relief to me when Mrs. Follett asked me to send Tom for the carriage.

"Be so kind as to send a servant for it," said Follett, very coolly, "and say to Mrs. Follett that I will join her at home. I am going to sup, or rather breakfast, with Mrs. Beverly Fairlie!"

Here was a mess!

"Shall I send the Count for your shawl?" I asked, after giving this message, and wishing to know whether she was this side of pride in her unhappiness.

The little woman burst into tears.

"I will sit in the cloak room till my husband is ready," she said; "go to him, if you please, and implore him to come and speak to me."

As I said before, I wished the whole plot to the devil. We had achieved our object, it is true—and so did the man who knocked the breath out of his friend's body in killing a fly on his back. Tom is now (this was years ago) a married flirt of some celebrity, for, after coming out of the widow's hands with a three months' education, he had quite forgot to be troubled about Mrs. Follett; and, instead of neglecting his dress, which was his only sin when I took him in hand, he now neglects his wife, who sees him, as women are apt to see their husbands, through other women's eyes. I presume they are doomed to quite as much unhappiness as would have fallen to their lot had I left them alone—had Mrs. Follett ran away with the Frenchman, and had Tom died a divorced sloven. But when I think that, beside achieving little for them, I was the direct means of spoiling Mrs. Beverly Fairlie for myself, I think I may write myself down as a warning to *meddlers in matrimony*.

LADY RAVELGOLD

CHAPTER I.

"What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut
With diamonds? or to be smothered quick
With cassia, or be shot to death with pearls?—DUCHESS OF MALFY,

"I've been i' the Indies twice, and seen strange things—
But two honest women!—*One* I read of once!"—RULE A WIFE.

It was what is called by people on the continent a "London day." A thin, grey mist drizzled down through the smoke which darkened the long cavern of Fleet street; the sidewalks were slippery and clammy; the drays slid from side to side on the greasy pavement, creating a perpetual clamour among the lighter carriages with which they came in contact; the porters wondered that "gemmen" would carry their umbrellas up when there was no rain, and the gentlemen wondered that porters should be permitted on the sidewalks; there were passengers in box-coats, though it was the first of May,

and beggars with bare breasts, though it was chilly as November; the boys were looking wistfully into the hosier's windows who were generally at the pastrycook's; and there were persons who wished to know the time, trying in vain to see the dial of St. Paul's through the gamboge atmosphere,

It was twelve o'clock, and a plain chariot, with a simple crest on the panels, slowly picked its way through the choked and disputed thoroughfare east of Temple Bar. The smart glazed hat of the coachman, the well-fitted drab greatcoat and gaiters of the footman, and the sort of half-submissive, half-contemptuous look on both their faces (implying that they were bound to drive to the devil if it were miladi's orders, but that the rabble of Fleet street was a *little* too vulgar for their contact), expressed very plainly that the lady within was a denizen of a more privileged quarter, but had chosen a rainy day for some compulsory visit to "the city."

At the rate of perhaps a mile an hour, the well-groomed night-horses (a pair of smart, hardy, twelve-mile cabs, all bottom, but little style, kept for night-work and forced journeys) had threaded the tortuous entrails of London, and had arrived at the arch of a dark court in Throgmorton street. The coachman put his wheels snug against the edge of the sidewalk, to avoid being crushed by the passing drays, and settled his many-caped benjamin about him; while the footman spread his umbrella, and making a balustrade of his arm for his mistress's assistance, a closely-veiled lady descended, and disappeared up the wet and ill-paved avenue.

The green-baize door of Firkins and Co., opened on its silent hinges and admitted the mysterious visiter, who inquiring of the nearest clerk if the junior partner were in, was shown to a small inner room containing a desk, two chairs, a coal fire, and a young gentleman. The last article of furniture rose on the lady's entrance, and, as she threw off her veil, he made a low bow, with the air of a gentleman who is neither surprised nor embarrassed, and, pushing aside the door-checks, they were left alone.

There was that forced complaisance in the lady's manner, on her first entrance, which produced the slightest possible elevation of a very scornful lip owned by the junior partner; but the lady was only forty-five, highborn, and very handsome, and, as she looked at the fine specimen of nature's nobility, who met her with a look as proud and yet as gentle

as her own, the smoke of Fleet street passed away from her memory, and she became natural and even gracious. The effect upon the junior partner was simply that of removing from his breast the shade of her first impression.

"I have brought you," said his visitor, drawing a card from her reticule, "an invitation to the Duchess of Hautaigle's ball. She sent me half a dozen to fill up for what she calls 'ornamentals'—and I am sure I shall scarce find another who comes so decidedly under her Grace's category."

The fair speaker had delivered this pretty speech in the sweetest and best-bred tone of St. James's, looking the while at the toe of the small *brodequin* which she held up to the fire—*perhaps* thinking only of drying it. As she concluded her sentence, she turned to her companion for an answer, and was surprised at the impassive politeness of his bow of acknowledgment.

"I regret that I shall not be able to avail myself of your ladyship's kindness," said the junior partner, in the same well-enunciated tone of courtesy.

"Then," replied the lady with a smile, "Lord Augustus Fitz-Moi, who looks all himself at dinner-time in a spoon, will be the Apollo of the hour. What a pity such a handsome creature should be so vain! By-the-way, Mr. Firkins, you live without a looking-glass, I see."

"Your ladyship reminds me that this is merely a place of business. May I ask at once what errand has procured me the honour of a visit on so unpleasant a day?"

A slight flush brightened the cheek and forehead of the beautiful woman, as she compressed her lips, and forced herself to say with affected ease, "The want of five hundred pounds."

The junior partner paused an instant, while the lady tapped with her boot upon the fender in ill-dissembled anxiety, and then, turning to his desk, he filled up the check without remark, presented it, and took his hat to wait on her to the carriage. A gleam of relief and pleasure shot over her countenance as she closed her small jewelled hand over it, followed immediately by a look of embarrassed inquiry into the face of the unquestioning banker.

"I am in your debt already."

"Thirty thousand pounds, madam!"

"And for this you think the securities on the estate of Rockland—"

"Are worth nothing, madam! But it rains. I regret that

your ladyship's carriage cannot come to the door. In the old-fashioned days of sedan-chairs, now, the dark courts of Lothbury, must have been more attractive. By the way talking of Lothbury there is Lady Roseberry's *fête champêtre* next week. If you should chance to have a spare card——"

"Twenty, if you like—I am too happy—really, Mr. Firkins——"

"It's on the fifteenth; I shall have the honour of seeing your ladyship there! Good-morning! Home, coachman!"

"Does this man love me?" was Lady Ravelgold's first thought, as she sank back in her returning chariot. "Yet no! he was even rude in his haste to be rid of me. And I would willingly have stayed too, for there is something about him of a mark that I like. Ay, and he must have seen it—a lighter encouragement has been interpreted more readily. Five hundred pounds!—really five hundred pounds! And thirty thousand at the back of it! What does he mean? Heavens! if he should be deeper than I thought! If he should wish to involve me first!"

And spite of the horror with which the thought was met in the mind of Lady Ravelgold, the blush over her forehead died away into a half smile and a brighter tint in her lips; and, as the carriage wound slowly on through the confused press of Fleet street and the Strand, the image of the handsome and haughty young banker shut her eyes from all sounds without, and she was at her own door in Grosvenor square before she had changed position, or wandered half a moment from the subject of those busy dreams.

CHAPTER II.

THE morning of the fifteenth of May seemed to have been appointed by all the flowers as a jubilee of perfume and bloom. The birds had been invited, and sang in the summer with a welcome as full-throated as a prima donna singing down the tenor in a duet: the most laggard buds turned out their hearts to the sunshine, and promised leaves on the morrow; and that portion of London that had been invited to Lady Roseberry's *fête*, thought it a very fine day! That portion which was not, wondered how people would go sweltering about in such a glare for a cold dinner!

At about half-past two, a very elegant dark-green cab with-

out a crest, and with a servant in whose slight figure and plain blue livery there was not a fault, whirled out at the gate of the Regent's Park, and took its way up the well-watered road leading to Hampstead. The gentlemen whom it passed or met turned to admire the performance of the dark-grey horse, and the ladies looked after the cab as if they could see the handsome occupant once more through its leather back. Whether by conspiracy among the coach-makers, or by an aristocracy of taste, the degree of elegance, in a turn-out attained by the cab just described, is usually confined to the acquaintances of Lady —; that list being understood to enumerate all "the nice young men" of the West End, beside the guardsmen. (The *ton* of the latter, in all matters that affect the style of the regiment, is looked after by the club and the colonel.) The junior Firkins seemed an exception to this exclusive rule. No "nice man" could come from Lothbury, and he did not visit Lady —; but his horse was faultless, and when he turned into the gate of Rose-Eden, the policeman at the porter's lodge, though he did not know him, thought it unnecessary to ask for his name. Away he spattered up the hilly avenue, and, giving the reins to his groom at the end of a green arbour leading to the reception-lawn, he walked in and made his bow to Lady Roseberry, who remarked, "How very handsome! Who can he be?" and the junior partner walked on and disappeared down an avenue of laburnums.

Ah! but Rose-Eden looked a Paradise that day! Hundreds had passed across the close-shaven lawn, with a bow to the lady-mistress of this fair abode. Yet the grounds were still private enough for Milton's pair, so lost were they in the green labyrinths of hill and dale. Some had descended through heavily-shaded paths to a fancy-dairy, built over a fountain in the bottom of a cool dell; and here, amid her milk-pans of old and costly china, the prettiest maid in the country round pattered about upon a floor of Dutch tiles, and served her visitors with creams and ices—already, as it were, adapted to fashionable comprehension. Some had strayed to the ornamental cottages in the skirts of the flower-garden—poetical abodes, built from a picturesque drawing, with imitation roughness; thatch, lattice-window, and low paling, all complete, and inhabited by superannuated dependents of Lord Roseberry, whose only duties were to look like patriarchs, and give tea and new cream-cheese to visitors on fête-days. Some had

gone to see the silver and gold pheasants in their wire-houses, stately aristocrats of the game tribe, who carry their finely-pencilled feathers like "Marmalet Madarus," strutting in hoop and farthingale. Some had gone to the kennels, to see setters and pointers, hounds and terriers, lodged like gentlemen, each breed in its own apartment—the puppies, as elsewhere, treated with most attention. Some were in the flower-garden, some in the green-houses, some in the graperies, aviaries, and grottoes; and, at the side of a bright sparkling fountain, in the recesses of a fir-grove, with her foot upon its marble lip, and one hand on the shoulder of a small Cupid who archly made a drinking-cup of his wing, and caught the bright water as it fell, stood Lady Imogen Ravelgold, the loveliest girl of nineteen that prayed night and morning within the parish of May Fair, listening to very passionate language from the young banker of Lothbury.

A bugle on the lawn rang a recall. From every alley, and by every path, poured in the gay multitude, and the smooth sward looked like a plateau of animated flowers, worked by magic from a broidery on green velvet. Ah! the beautiful *demi-toilettes*!—so difficult to attain, yet, when attained, the dress most modest, most captivating, most worthy the divine grace of woman. Those airy hats, sheltering from the sun, yet not enviously concealing a feature or a ringlet that a painter would draw for his exhibition-picture! Those summery and shapeless robes, covering the person more to show its outline better, and provoke more the worship, which, like all worship, is made more adoring by mystery! Those complexions which but betray their transparency in the sun; lips in which the blood is translucent when between you and the light; cheeks finer-grained than alabaster, yet as cool in their virgin purity as a tint in the dark corner of a Ruysdel: the human race was at less perfection in Athens in the days of Lais—in Egypt in the days of Cleopatra—than that day on the lawn of Rose-Eden.

Cart-loads of ribands, of every gay colour, had been laced through the trees in all directions; and amid every variety of foliage, and every shade of green, the tulip-tints shone vivid and brilliant, like an American forest after the first frost. From the left edge of the lawn, the ground suddenly sunk into a dell, shaped like an amphitheatre, with a level platform at its bottom, and all around, above and below, thickened a shady wood. The music of a delicious band stole up from the re-

cesses of a grove, draped in an orchestra and green-room on the lower side, and, while the audience disposed themselves in the shade of the upper grove, a company of players and dancing-girls commenced their theatricals. Imogen Ravelgold, who was separated, by a pine tree only, from the junior partner, could scarce tell you, when it was finished, what was the plot of the play.

The recall-bugle sounded again, and the band wound away from the lawn, playing a gay march. Followed Lady Roseberry and her suite of gentlemen, followed dames and their daughters, followed all who wished to see the flight of my lord's falcons. By a narrow path and a wicket-gate, the long music-guided train stole out upon an open hill-side, looking down on a verdant and spreading meadow. The band played at a short distance behind the gay groups of spectators, and it was a pretty picture to look down upon the splendidly-dressed falconer and his men, holding their fierce birds upon their wrists, in their hoods and jesses, a foreground of old chivalry and romance; while far beyond extended, like a sea over the horizon, the smoke-clad pinnacles of busy and every-day London. There are such contrasts for the rich!

The scarlet hood was taken from the trustiest falcon, and a dove, confined, at first, with a string, was thrown up and brought back to excite his attention. As he fixed his eyes upon him, the frightened victim was let loose, and the falcon flung off; away skimmed the dove in a low flight over the meadow, and up to the very zenith in circles of amazing swiftness and power, sped the exulting falcon, apparently forgetful of his prey, and bound for the eye of the sun with his strong wings and his liberty. The falconer's whistle and cry were heard; the dove circled round the edge of the meadow in his wavy flight; and down, with the speed of lightning, shot the falcon, striking his prey dead to the earth before the eye could settle on his form. As the proud bird stood upon his victim, looking around with a lifted crest and fierce eye, Lady Imogen Ravelgold heard, in a voice of which her heart knew the music, "They who soar highest strike surest; the dove lies in the falcon's bosom."

CHAPTER III.

THE afternoon had, meantime, being wearing on, and at six the "breakfast" was announced. The tents beneath which

the tables were spread were in different parts of the grounds, and the guests had made up their own parties. Each sped to his rendezvous, and, as the last loiterers disappeared from the lawn, a gentleman in a claret coat, and a brown study, found himself stopping to let a lady pass who was obeying the summons as tardily as himself. In a white chip hat, Hairbault's last, a few lilies of the valley laid among the raven curls beneath, a simple white robe, the *chef-d'œuvre* of Victorine in style and *tournure*, Lady Ravelgold would have been the belle of the fête, but for her daughter.

"Well emerged from Lothbury!" she said, courtesying, with a slight flush over her features, but immediately taking his arm; "I have lost my party, and meeting you is opportune. Where shall we breakfast?"

There was a small tent standing invitingly open, on the opposite side of the lawn, and, by the fainter rattle of soup-spoons from that quarter, it promised to be less crowded than the others. The junior partner would willingly have declined the proffered honour, but he saw at glance that there was no escape, and submitted with a grace.

"You know very few people here," said his fair creditor, taking the bread from her napkin.

"Your ladyship and one other."

"Ah, we shall have dancing by-and-by, and I must introduce you to my daughter. By the way, have you no name from your mother's side? 'Firkins' sounds so very odd. Give me some prettier word to drink in this champagne."

"What do you think of Tremlet?"

"Too effeminate for your severe style of beauty—but it will do. Mr. Tremlet, your health! Will you give me a little of the *pâté* before you? Pray, if it is not indiscreet, how comes that classic profile, and, more surprising still, that distinguished look of yours, to have found no gayer destiny than the signing of 'Firkins and Co.' to notes of hand? Though I thought you became your den in Lothbury, upon my honour you look more at home here."

And Lady Ravelgold fixed her superb eyes upon the beautiful features of her companion, wondering partly why he did not speak, and partly why she had not observed before that he was incomparably the handsomest creature she had ever seen.

"I can regret no vocation," he answered after a moment,

"which procures me an acquaintance with your ladyship's family."

"There is an *arrière pensée* in that formal speech, Mr. Tremlet. You are insincere. I am the only one in my family whom you know, and what pleasure have you taken in my acquaintance? And, now I think of it, there is a mystery about you, which, but for the noble truth written so legibly on your features, I should be afraid to fathom. Why have you suffered me to over-draw my credit so enormously, and without a shadow of a protest?"

When Lady Ravelgold had disburdened her heart of this direct question, she turned half round and looked her companion in the face, with an intense interest which produced amid her own features an expression of earnestness very uncommon upon their pale and impassive lines. She was one of those persons of little thought, who care nothing for causes or consequences, so that the present difficulty is removed, or the present hour provided with its wings; but the repeated relief she had received from the young banker, when total ruin would have been the consequence of his refusal, and his marked coldness in his manner to her, had stimulated the utmost curiosity of which she was capable. Her vanity, founded upon her high rank and great renown as a beauty, would have agreed that he might be willing to get her into his power at that price, had he been less agreeable in his own person, or more eager in his manner. But she had wanted money sufficiently to know, that thirty thousand pounds are not a bagatelle, and her brain was busy till she discovered the equivalent he sought for it. Meantime her fear that he would turn out to be a lover, grew rapidly into a fear that he would not.

Lady Ravelgold had been the wife of a dissolute Earl, who had died, leaving his estate inextricably involved. With no male heir to the title or property, and no very near relation, the beautiful widow shut her eyes to the difficulties by which she was surrounded, and, at the first decent moment after the death of her lord, she had re-entered the gay society of which she had been the bright and particular star, and never dreamed either of diminishing her establishment, or calculating her possible income. The first heavy draft she had made upon the house of Firkins and Co., her husband's bankers, had been returned with a statement of the Ravelgold debt and credit on their books, by which it

appeared that Lord Ravelgold had overdrawn four or five thousand pounds before his death, and that, from some legal difficulties, nothing could be realized from the securities given on his estates. This bad news arrived on the morning of a fête to be given by the Russian ambassador, at which her only child, Lady Imogen, was to make her *début* in society. With the facility of disposition which was peculiar to her, Lady Ravelgold thrust the papers into her drawer, and determining to visit her banker on the following morning, threw the matter entirely from her mind and made preparations for the ball. With the Russian government the house of Firkins and Co. had long carried on very extensive fiscal transactions, and, in obedience to instructions from the Emperor, regular invitations for the embassy fêtes were sent to the bankers, accepted occasionally by the junior partner only, who was generally supposed to be a natural son of old Firkins. Out of the banking-house he was known as Mr. Tremlet, and it was by this name, which was presumed to be his mother's, that he was casually introduced to Lady Imogen on the night of the fête, while she was separated from her mother in the dancing-room. The consequence was a sudden, deep, ineffaceable passion in the bosom of the young banker, checked and silenced, but never lessened or chilled by the recollection of the obstacle of his birth. The impression of his subdued manner, his worshipping, yet most respectful tones, and the bright soul that breathed through his handsome features with his unusual excitement, was, to say the least, favourable upon Lady Imogen, and they parted on the night of the fête, mutually aware of each other's preference.

On the following morning Lady Ravelgold made her promised visit to the city, and, inquiring for Mr. Firkins, was shown in as usual to the junior partner, to whom the colloquial business of the concern had long been intrusted. To her surprise she found no difficulty in obtaining the sum of money which had been refused her on the previous day—a result which she attributed to her powers of persuasion, or to some new turn in the affairs of the estate; and for two years these visits had been repeated, at intervals of three or four months, with the same success, though not with the same delusion as to the cause. She had discovered that the estate was worse than nothing, and the junior partner cared little to prolong his *tête-à-têtes* with her, and, up to the visit with

which this tale opened, she had looked to every succeeding one with increased fear and doubt.

During these two years, Tremlet had seen Lady Imogen occasionally at balls and public places, and every look they exchanged wove more strongly between them the subtle threads of love. Once or twice she had endeavoured to interest her mother in conversation on the subject, with the intention of making a confidence of her feelings; but Lady Ravelgold, when not anxious, was giddy with her own success, and the unfamiliar name never rested a moment on her ear. With this explanation to render the tale intelligible, "let us," as the French say, "return to our muttons."

Of the conversation between Tremlet and her mother, Lady Imogen was an unobserved and astonished witness. The tent which they had entered was large, with a *buffet* in the centre, and a circular table waited on by servants within the ring; and, just concealed by the drapery around the pole, sat Lady Imogen with a party of her friends, discussing very seriously the threatened fashion of tight sleeves. She had half risen, when her mother entered, to offer her a seat by her side, but the sight of Tremlet, who immediately followed, had checked the words upon her lip, and, to her surprise, they seated themselves on the side that was wholly unoccupied, and conversed in a tone inaudible to all but themselves. Not aware that her lover knew Lady Ravelgold, she supposed that they might have been casually introduced, till the earnestness of her mother's manner, and a certain ease between them in the little courtesies of the table, assured her that this could not be their first interview. Tremlet's face was turned from her, and she could not judge whether he was equally interested; but she had been so accustomed to consider her mother as irresistible when she chose to please, that she supposed it, of course; and very soon the heightened colour of Lady Ravelgold, and the unwavering look of mingled admiration and curiosity which she bent upon the handsome face of her companion, left no doubt in her mind that her reserved and exclusive lover was in the dangerous toils of a rival whose power she knew. From the mortal pangs of a first jealousy, Heaven send thee deliverance, fair Lady Imogen.

"We shall find our account in the advances on your ladyship's credit," said Tremlet, in reply to the direct question that was put to him. "Meantime permit me to admire the

courage with which you look so disagreeable a subject in the face."

"For 'disagreeable subject,' read 'Mr. Tremlet.' I show my temerity more in that. *Apropos* of faces, yours would become the new fashion of cravat. The men at Crockford's slip the ends through a ring of their lady-love's, if they chance to have one—thus!" and untying the loose knot of his black satin cravat, Lady Ravelgold slipped over the ends a diamond of small value, conspicuously set in pearls.

"The men at Crockford's," said Tremlet, hesitating to commit the rudeness of removing the ring, "are not of my school of manners. If I had been so fortunate as to inspire a lady with a preference for me, I should not advertise it on my cravat."

"But suppose the lady were proud of her preference, as dames were of the devotion of their knights in the days of chivalry—would you not wear her favour as conspicuously as they?"

A flush of mingled embarrassment and surprise shot over the forehead of Tremlet, and he was turning the ring with his fingers, when Lady Imogen, attempting to pass out of the tent, was stopped by her mother.

"Imogen, my daughter, this is Mr. Tremlet. Lady Imogen Ravelgold, Mr. Tremlet."

The cold and scarce perceptible bow which the wounded girl gave to her lover, betrayed no previous acquaintance to the careless Lady Ravelgold. Without giving a second thought to her daughter, she held her glass for some champagne to a passing servant, and, as Lady Imogen and her friends crossed the lawn to the dancing-tent, she resumed the conversation which they had interrupted; while Tremlet, with his heart brooding on the altered look he had received, listened and replied almost unconsciously; yet, from this very circumstance, in a manner which was interpreted by his companion as the embarrassment of a timid and long-repressed passion for herself.

While Lady Ravelgold and the junior partner were thus playing at cross purposes over their champagne and *bons-bons*, Grisi and Lablache were singing a duet from *I Puritani*, to a full audience in the saloon; the drinking young men sat over their wine at the nearly-deserted tables; Lady Imogen and her friends waltzed to Collinet's band, and the artisans

were busy below the lawn, erecting the machinery for the fireworks. Meantime every alley and avenue, grot and labyrinth, had been dimly illuminated with coloured lamps, showing like vari-coloured glow-worms amid the foliage and shells; and if the bright scenery of Rose-Eden had been lovely by day, it was fay-land and witchery by night. Fatal impulse of our nature, that these approaches to Paradise in the "daylight of the eye," stir only in our bosoms the passions upon which law and holy writ have put ban and bridle!

"Shall we stroll down this alley of crimson lamps?" said Lady Ravelgold, crossing the lawn from the tent where their coffee had been brought to them, and putting her slender arm far into that of her now pale and silent companion.

A lady in a white dress stood at the entrance of that crimson avenue, as Tremlet and his passionate admirer disappeared beneath the closing lines of the long perspective, and, remaining a moment gazing through the unbroken twinkle of the confusing lamps, she pressed her hand hard upon her forehead, drew up her form as if struggling with some irrepressible feeling, and in another moment was whirling in the waltz with Lord Ernest Fitzantelope, whose mother wrote a complimentary paragraph about their performance for the next Saturday's Court Journal.

The bugle sounded, and the band played a march upon the lawn. From the breakfast tents, from the coffee-rooms, from the dance, from the card-tables, poured all who wished to witness the marvels that lie in saltpetre. Gentlemen, who stood in a tender attitude in the darkness, held themselves ready to lean the other way when the rockets blazed up, and mammas who were encouraging flirtations with eligibles, whispered a caution on the same subject to their less experienced daughters.

Up sped the missiles, round spun the wheels, fair burned the pagodas, swift flew the fire-doves off and back again on their wires, and softly floated down through the dewy atmosphere of that May night the lambent and many-coloured stars, flung burning from the exploded rockets. Device followed device, and Lady Imogen almost forgot, in her child's delight at the spectacle, that she had taken into her bosom a green serpent, whose folds were closing like suffocation about her heart.

The *finale* was to consist of a new light, invented by the

pyrotechnist, promised to Lady Roseberry to be several degrees brighter than the sun—comparatively with a quantity of matter. Before this last flourish came a pause; and, while all the world were murmuring love and applause around her, Lady Imogen, with her eyes fixed on an indefinite point in the darkness, took advantage of the cessation of light to feed her serpent with thoughts of passionate and uncontrollable pain. A French *attaché*, Phillipiste to the very tips of his mustache, addressed to her ear, meantime, the compliments he had found most effective in the *Chaussée d'Antin*.

The light burst suddenly from a hundred blazing points, clear, dazzling, intense—illuminating, as by the instantaneous burst of day, the farthest corner of Rose-Eden. And Monsieur Mangepoire, with a French contempt for English fireworks, took advantage of the first ray to look into Lady Imogen's eyes.

"*Mais, Miladi!*" was his immediate exclamation, after following their direction with a glance, "*ce n'est qu'un tableau vivant, cela!* Help, gentlemen! *Elle s'évanouit.* Some salts! *Misericorde! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" And Lady Imogen Ravelgold was carried fainting to Lady Rosebery's chamber.

In a small opening at the end of a long avenue of lilacs, extended from the lawn in the direction of Lady Imogen's fixed and unconscious gaze, was presented, by the unexpected illumination, the *tableaux vivant*, seen by her ladyship and Monsieur Mangepoire at the same instant—a gentleman drawn up to his fullest height, with his arms folded, and a lady kneeling on the ground at his feet with her arms stretched up to his bosom.

CHAPTER IV.

A LITTLE after two o'clock on the following Wednesday, Tremlet's cabriolet stopped near the *perron* of Willis's rooms in King street; and while he sent up his card to the lady patronesses for his ticket to that night's Almacks, he busied himself in looking into the crowd of carriages about him, and reading on the faces of their fair occupants the hope and anxiety to which they were a prey till John the footman brought them tickets or despair. Drawn up on the opposite side of the street, stood a family-carriage of the old style, covered with half the arms of the Heralds' Office, and containing a fat dowager and three very over-dressed daughters.

Watching them, to see the effect of their application, stood upon the sidewalk three or four young men from the neighbouring club-house, and at the moment Tremlet was observing these circumstances, a foreign britsčka, containing a beautiful woman, of a reputation better understood than expressed in the conclave above stairs, flew round the corner of St. James's street, and very nearly drove into the mouth of the junior partner's cabriolet.

"I will bet you a Ukraine colt against this fine bay of yours," said the Russian secretary of legation, advancing from the group of dandies to Tremlet, "that miladi, yonder, with all the best blood of England in her own and her daughters' red faces, gets no tickets this morning."

"I'll take a bet on the lady who has nearly extinguished me, if you like," answered Tremlet, gazing with admiration at the calm, delicate, child-like looking creature, who sat before him in the britsčka.

"No!" said the secretary, "for Almack's is a republic of beauty, and she'll be voted in without either blood or virtue. *Par exemple*, Lady Ravelgold's voucher is good here, though she does study *tableaux* in Lothbury—eh, Tremlet?"

Totally unaware of the unlucky discovery by the fireworks at Lady Roseberry's fête, Tremlet coloured and was inclined to take the insinuation as an affront; but a laugh from the dandies drew off his companion's attention, and he observed the dowager's footman standing at her coach window with his empty hands held up in most expressive negation, while the three young ladies within sat aghast, in all the agonies of disappointed hopes. The lumbering carriage got into motion—its ineffective blazonry paled by the mortified blush of its occupants—and, as the junior partner drove away, philosophizing on the arbitrary opinions and unprovoked insults of polite society, the britsčka shot by, showing him, as he leaned forward, a lovely woman who bent on him the most dangerous eyes in London, and an Almack's ticket lying on the unoccupied cushion beside her.

The white *relievo* upon the pale blue wall of Almack's showed every crack in its stucco flowers, and the jaded chaperons who had defects of a similar description to conceal, took warning of the walls, and retreated to the friendlier dimness of the tea-room. Collinet was beginning the second set

of quadrilles, and among the fairest of the surpassingly beautiful women who were moving to his heavenly music, was Lady Imogen Ravelgold, the lovelier to-night for the first heavy sadness that had ever dimmed the roses in her cheek. Her lady-mother divided her thoughts between what this could mean, and whether Mr. Tremlet would come to the ball; and when, presently after, in the *dos-d-dos*, she forgot to look at her daughter, on seeing that gentleman enter, she lost a very good opportunity for a guess at the cause of Lady Imogen's paleness.

To the pure and true eye that appreciates the divinity of the form after which woman is made, it would have been a glorious feast to have seen the perfection of shape, colour, motion, and countenance, shown that night on the bright floor of Almack's. For the young and beautiful girls whose envied destiny is to commence their woman's history in this exclusive hall, there exists aids to beauty known to no other class or nation. Perpetual vigilance over every limb from the cradle up; physical education of a perfection, discipline, and judgment, pursued only at great expense and under great responsibility; moral education of the highest kind, habitual consciousness of rank, exclusive contact with elegance and luxury, and a freedom of intellectual culture which breathes a soul through the face before passion has touched it with a line or a shade—these are some of the circumstances which make Almack's the cynosure of the world for adorable and radiant beauty.

There were three ladies who had come to Almack's with a definite object that night, each of whom was destined to be surprised and foiled: Lady Ravelgold, who feared that she had been abrupt with the inexperienced banker, but trusted to find him softened by a day or two's reflection; Mrs. St. Leger, the lady of the britscka, who had ordered supper for two on her arrival at home from her morning's drive, and intended to have the company of the handsome creature she had nearly run over in King street; and Lady Imogen Ravelgold, as will appear in the sequel.

Tremlet stood in the entrance of the tea-room a moment, gathering courage to walk alone into such a dazzling scene, and then, having caught a glimpse of the glossy lines of Lady Imogen's head at the farthest end of the room, he was advancing toward her, when he was addressed by a lady who

leaned against one of the slender column of the orchestra. After a sweetly-phrased apology for having nearly knocked out his brains that morning with her horses' fore feet, Mrs. St. Leger took his arm, and walking deliberately two or three times up and down the room, took possession, at last, of a *banquette* on the highest range, so far from any other person that it would have been a marked rudeness to have left her alone. Tremlet took his seat by her with this instinctive feeling, trusting that some of her acquaintances would soon approach and give him a fair excuse to leave her; but he soon became amused with her piquant style of conversation, and, not aware of being observed, fell into the attitude of a pleased and earnest listener.

Lady Ravelgold's feelings during this *petit entretien* were of a very positive description. She had an instinctive knowledge, and consequently a jealous dislike of Mrs. St. Leger's character; and, still under the delusion that the young banker's liberality was prompted by a secret passion for herself, she saw her credit in the city and her hold upon the affections of Tremlet (for whom she had really conceived a violent affection) melting away in every smile of the dangerous woman who engrossed him. As she looked around for a friend to whose ear she might communicate some of the suffocating poison in her own heart, Lady Imogen returned to her from a gallopade; and, like a second dagger into the heart of the pure-minded girl went this second proof of her lover's corrupt principle and conduct. Unwilling to believe even her own eyes on the night of Lady Roseberry's fête, she had summoned resolution on her road home to ask an explanation of her mother. Embarrassed by the abrupt question, Lady Ravelgold felt obliged to make a partial confidence of the state of her pecuniary affairs; and, to clear herself, she represented Tremlet as having taken advantage of her obligations to him to push a dishonourable suit. The scene disclosed by the ruddy blaze of the fireworks being thus simply explained, Lady Imogen determined at once to give up Tremlet's acquaintance altogether; a resolution which his open flirtation with a woman of Mrs. St. Leger's character served to confirm. She had, however, one errand with him, prompted by her filial feelings and favoured by an accidental circumstance, which will appear.

"Do you believe in animal magnetism?" asked Mrs. St.

Leger, "for by the fixedness of Lady Ravelgold's eyes in this quarter something is going to happen to one of us."

The next moment the Russian secretary approached and took his seat by Mrs. St. Leger, and with diplomatic address contrived to convey to Tremlet's ear that Lady Ravelgold wished to speak with him. The banker rose, but the quick wit of his companion comprehended the manœuvre.

"Ah! I see how it is," she said, "but stay—you'll sup with me to-night. Promise me—*parole d'honneur*!"

"*Parole!*" answered Tremlet, making his way out between the seats, half pleased and half embarrassed.

"As for you, *Monsieur le Secrétaire*," said Mrs. St. Leger, "you have forfeited my favour, and may sup elsewhere. How dare you conspire against me?"

While the Russian was making his peace, Tremlet crossed over to Lady Ravelgold; but, astonished at the change in Lady Imogen, he soon broke in abruptly upon her mother's conversation to ask her to dance. She accepted his hand for a quadrille, but as they walked down the room in search of a *vis-à-vis* she complained of heat, and asked timidly if he would take her to the tea-room.

"Mr. Tremlet," she said, fixing her eyes upon the cup of tea which he had given her, and which she found some difficulty in holding, "I have come here to-night to communicate to you some important information, to ask a favour, and to break off an acquaintance which has lasted too long."

Lady Imogen stopped, for the blood had fled from her lips, and she was compelled to ask his arm for a support. She drew herself up to her fullest height the next moment, looked at Tremlet, who stood in speechless astonishment, and with a strong effort commenced again in a low, firm tone.

"I have been acquainted with you some time, sir, and have never inquired nor knew more than your name up this day. I suffered myself to be pleased too blindly—"

"Dear Lady Imogen!"

"Stay a moment, sir! I will proceed directly to my business. I received this morning a letter from the senior partner of a mercantile house in the city with which you are connected. It is written on the supposition that I have some interest in you, and informs me that you are not, as you yourself suppose, the son of the gentleman who writes the letter.

"Madam!"

"That gentleman, sir, as you know, never was married. He informs me that, in the course of many financial visits to St. Petersburg, he formed a friendship with Count Manteuffel, then minister of finance to the emperor, whose tragical end, in consequence of his extensive defalcations, is well known. In brief, sir, you were his child, and were taken by this English banker and carefully educated as his own, in happy ignorance, as he imagined, of your father's misfortunes and mournful death."

Tremlet leaned against the wall, unable to reply to this astounding intelligence, and Lady Imogen went on.

"Your title and estates have been restored to you at the request of your kind benefactor, and you are now the heir to a princely fortune, and a count of the Russian empire. Here is the letter, sir, which is of no value to me now. Mr. Tremlet! one word more, sir."

Lady Imogen gasped for breath.

"In return, sir, for much interest given you heretofore—in return, sir, for this information——"

"Speak, dear Lady Imogen!"

"Spare my mother!"

"Mrs. St. Leger's carriage stops the way!" shouted a servant at that moment at the top of the stairs; and, as if there were a spell in the sound to nerve her resolution anew, Lady Imogen Ravelgold shook the tears from her eyes, bowed coldly to Tremlet, and passed out into the dressing-room.

"If you please, sir," said a servant approaching the amazed banker, "Mrs. St. Leger waits for you in her carriage."

"Will you come home and sup with us?" said Lady Ravelgold at the same instant, joining him in the tea-room.

"I shall be only too happy, Lady Ravelgold."

The bold coachman of Mrs. St. Leger continued to "stop the way," spite of policemen and infuriated footmen, for some fifteen minutes. At the end of that time Mr. Tremlet appeared, handing down Lady Ravelgold and her daughter, who walked to their chariot, which was a few steps behind; and very much to Mrs. St. Leger's astonishment the handsome banker sprang past her horses' heads a minute after, jumped into his cabriolet, which stood on the opposite side of the street, and drove after the vanishing chariot as if his life depended on overtaking it. Still Mrs. St. Leger's carriage "stopped the way." But in a few minutes after the same

footman who had summoned Tremlet in vain, returned with the Russian secretary, doomed in blessed unconsciousness to play the *pis aller* at her *tête-à-tête* supper in Spring Gardens.

CHAPTER V.

IF Lady Ravelgold showed beautiful by the uncompromising light and in the ornamental hall of Almack's, she was radiant as she came through the mirror door of her own love-contrived and beauty-breathing boudoir. Tremlet had been shown into this recess of luxury and elegance on his arrival, and Lady Ravelgold and her daughter, who preceded her by a minute or two, had gone to their chambers, the first to make some slight changes in her toilet, and the latter (entirely ignorant of her lover's presence in the house), to be alone with a heart never before in such painful need of self-abandonment and solitude.

Tremlet looked about him in the enchanted room in which he found himself alone, and, spite of the prepossessed agitation of his feelings, the voluptuous beauty of every object had the effect to divert and tranquillize him. The light was profuse, but it came softened through the thinnest alabaster; and, while every object in the room was distinctly and minutely visible, the effect of moonlight was not more soft and dreamy. The general form of the boudoir was an oval, but, within the pilasters of folded silk with their cornices of gold, lay crypts containing copies, exquisitely done in marble, of the most graceful statues of antiquity, one of which seemed, by the curtain drawn quite aside, and a small antique lamp burning near it, to be the divinity of the place—the Greek Antinous, with his drooped head, and full, smooth limbs, the most passionate and life-like representation of voluptuous beauty that intoxicates the slumbrous air of Italy. Opposite this, another niche contained a few books, whose retreating shelves swung on a secret door, and, as it stood half open, the nodding head of a snowy magnolia leaned through, as if pouring from the lips of its broad chalice the mingled odours of the unseen conservatory it betrayed. The first sketch in crayons of a portrait of Lady Ravelgold by young Lawrence, stood against the wall, with the frame half buried in a satin ottoman; and, as Tremlet stood before it, admiring the clear,

classic outline of the head and bust, and wondering in what chamber of his brain the gifted artist had found the beautiful drapery in which he had drawn her, the dim light glanced faintly on the left, and the broad mirror by which he had entered swung again on its silver hinges, and admitted the very presentment of what he gazed on. Lady Ravelgold had removed the jewels from her hair, and the robe of wrought lace, which she had worn that night over a boddice of white satin, laced loosely below the bosom. In the place of this she had thrown upon her shoulders a flowing wrapper of purple velvet, made open after the Persian fashion, with a short and large sleeve, and embroidered richly with gold upon the skirts. Her admirable figure, gracefully defined by the satin petticoat and boddice, showed against the gorgeous purple as it flowed back in her advancing motion, with a relief which would have waked the very soul of Titian; her complexion was dazzling and faultless in the flattering light of her own rooms; and there are those who will read this who know how the circumstances which surround a woman—luxury, elegance, taste; or the opposite of these—enhance or dim, beyond help or calculation, even the highest order of woman's beauty.

Lady Ravelgold held a bracelet in her hand as she came in.

"In my own house," she said, holding the glittering jewel to Tremlet, "I have a fancy for the style antique. Tasseline, my maid, has gone to bed, and you must do the devoirs of a knight, or an abigail, and loop up this Tyrian sleeve. Stay—first look at the model—that small statue of Cytheris, yonder! Not the shoulder—for you are to swear mine is prettier—but the clasp. Fasten it like that. So! Now take me for a Grecian nymph the rest of the evening."

"Lady Ravelgold!"

"Hermione or Aglæe, if you please! But let us ring for supper!"

As the bell sounded, a superb South American trulian darted in from the conservatory, and, spreading his gorgeous black and gold wings a moment over the alabaster shoulder of Lady Ravelgold, as if he took a pleasure in prolonging the first touch as he alighted, turned his large, liquid eye fiercely on Tremlet.

"Thus it is," said Lady Ravelgold, "we forget our old favourites in our new. See how jealous he is!"

"Supper is served, miladi!" said a servant, entering.

"A hand to each, then, for the present," she said, putting one into Tremlet's, and holding up the trulian with the other. "He who behaves best shall drink first with me."

"I beg your ladyship's pardon," said Tremlet, drawing back, and looking at the servant, who immediately left the room. "Let us understand each other! Does Lady Imogen sup with us to-night?"

"Lady Imogen has retired," said her mother in some surprise.

"Then, madam, will you be seated one moment and listen to me?"

Lady Ravelgold sat down on the nearest ottoman, with the air of person too high-bred to be taken by surprise, but the colour deepened to crimson in the centre of her cheek, and the bird on her hand betrayed by one of his gurgling notes that he was held more tightly than pleased him. With a calm and decisive tone, Tremlet went through the explanation given in the previous parts of this narration. He declared his love for Lady Imogen, his hopes (while he had doubts of his birth) that Lady Ravelgold's increasing obligations and embarrassments and his own wealth might weigh against his disadvantages; and now, his honourable descent being established, and his rank entitling him to propose for her hand, he called upon Lady Ravelgold to redeem her obligations to him by an immediate explanation to her daughter of his conduct toward herself, and by lending her whole influence to the success of his suit.

Five minutes are brief time to change a lover into a son-in-law; and Lady Ravelgold, as we have seen in the course of this story, was no philosopher. She buried her face in her hands, and sat silent for a while, after Tremlet had concluded: but the case was a very clear one. Ruin and mortification were in one scale, mortification and prosperity in the other. She rose, pale but decided, and requesting Monsieur le Comte Manteuffel to await her a few minutes, ascended to her daughter's chamber.

"If you please, sir," said a servant, entering in about half an hour, "miladi and Lady Imogen beg that you will join them in the supper-room."

CHAPTER VI.

THE spirit of beauty, if it haunt in such artificial atmospheres as Belgrave-square, might have been pleased to sit invisibly on the vacant side of Lady Ravelgold's table. Tremlet had been shown in by the servant to a small apartment, built like a belvedere over the garden, half boudoir in its character, yet intended as a supper-room, and, at the long window (opening forth upon descending terraces laden with flowers, and just now flooded with the light of a glorious moon) stood Lady Imogen, with her glossy head laid against the casement, and the palm of her left hand pressed close upon her heart. If those two lights—the moon faintly shed off from the divine curve of her temple, and the stained rose-lamp pouring its mellow tint full on the heavenly shape and whiteness of her shoulder and neck—if those two lights, I say, could have been skilfully managed, Mr. Lawrence! what a picture you might have made of Lady Imogen Ravelgold!

"Imogen, my daughter! Mr. Tremlet!" said her mother as he entered.

Without changing her position, she gave him the hand she had been pressing on her heart.

"Mr. Tremlet!" said Lady Ravelgold, evidently entering into her daughter's embarrassment, "trouble yourself to come to the table and give me a bit of this pheasant. Imogen, George waits to give you some champagne."

"Can you forgive me?" said the beautiful girl, before turning to betray her blushing cheek and suffused eyes to her mother.

Tremlet stopped as if to pluck a leaf from the verbena at her feet, and passed his lips over the slight fingers he held.

"Pretty trulian!" murmured Lady Ravelgold to her bird, as he stood on the edge of her champagne-glass, and curving his superb neck nearly double, contrived to drink from the sparkling brim—"pretty trulian! you will be merry after this! What ancient Sybarite, think you, Mr. Tremlet, inhabits the body of this bright bird? Look up, *mignon*, and tell us if you were Hylas or Alcibiades! Is the pheasant good, Mr. Tremlet?"

"Too good to come from Hades, miladi. Is it true that you have your table supplied from Crockford's?"

"*Tout bonnement!* I make it a principle to avoid all great

anxieties, and I can trust nobody but Ude. He sends my dinners quite hot, and if there is a particular dish of game, he drives round at the hour and gives it the last turn in my own kitchen. I should die to be responsible for my dinners. I don't know how people get on that have no *grand artiste*. Pray, Mr. Tremlet (I beg pardon—Monsieur le Comte, perhaps I should say?)

"No, no, I implore you! 'Tremlet' has been spoken too musically to be so soon forgotten. Tremlet or Charles, which you will!"

Lady Ravelgold put her hand in his, and looked from his face to her daughter's with a smile, which assured him that she had obtained a victory over herself. Shrinking immediately, however, from anything like sentiment (with the nervous dread of pathos so peculiar to the English), she threw off her trulian, that made a circle and alighted on the emerald bracelet of Lady Imogen, and rang the bell for coffee.

"I flatter myself, Mr. Tremlet," she said, "that I have made a new application of the homœopathic philosophy. Hahnemann, they say, cures fevers by aggravating the disease; and when I cannot sleep, I drink coffee. *J'en suis passablement fière!* You did not know I was a philosopher?"

"No, indeed!"

"Well, take some of this spiced mocha. I got it of the Turkish ambassador, to whom I made *beaux yeux* on purpose. Stop! you shall have it in the little tinsel cups he sent me. George, bring those filagree things! Now, Mr. Tremlet, imagine yourself in the *serail du Bosphore*—Imogen and I, two lovely Circassians, *par exemple!* Is it not delicious? Talking of Bosphorus, nobody was classical enough to understand the device in my *coiffure* to-night."

"What was it?" asked Tremlet, absently, gazing while he spoke, with eyes of envy at the trulian, who was whetting his bill, backward and forward, on the clear bright lips of Lady Imogen.

"Do you think my profile Grecian?" asked Lady Ravelgold.

"Perfectly!"

"And my hair is coiffed à la Grèque?"

"Most becomingly."

"But still you won't see my golden grasshopper! Do you happen to know, sir, that to wear the golden grasshopper was the birthright of an Athenian? I saw it in a book. Well! I had to explain it to everybody. By-the-way, what did that

gambler, George Heriot, mean by telling me that its legs should be black. 'All *Greeks* have black legs,' said he, yawning in his stupid way. What did he mean, Mr. Tremlet?"

"Greeks, and blacklegs are convertible terms. He thought you were more *au fait* of the slang dictionary. Will you permit me to coax my beautiful rival from your hand, Lady Imogen?"

She smiled, and put forward her wrist, with a bend of its slender and alabaster lines which would have drawn a sigh from Praxiteles. The trulian glanced his fiery eyes from his mistress's face to Tremlet's, and as the strange hand was put out to take him from his emerald perch, he flew with the quickness of lightning into the face of her lover, and buried the sharp beak in his lip. The blood followed copiously, and Lady Imogen, startled from her timidity, sprang from her chair and pressed her hands one after the other upon the wound, in passionate and girlish abandonment. Lady Ravelgold hurried to her dressing-room for something to staunch the wound, and, left alone with the divine creature who hung over him, Tremlet drew her to his bosom and pressed his cheek long and closely to hers; while to his lips, as if to keep in life, clung her own crimsoned and trembling fingers.

"Imogen!" said Lady Ravelgold, entering, "take him to the fountain in the garden and wash the wound; then put on this bit of gold-beater's skin. I will come to you when I have locked up the trulian. Is it painful, Mr. Tremlet?"

Tremlet could not trust his voice to answer; but, with his arm still around Imogen, he descended by the terrace of flowers to the fountain.

They sat upon the edge of the marble basin, and the moonlight striking through the jet of the fountain, descended upon them like a rain of silver. Lady Imogen had recovered from her fright, and buried her face in her hands, remembering into what her feelings had betrayed her; and Tremlet, sometimes listening to the clear bell-like music of the descending water, sometimes uttering the broken sentences which are most eloquent in love, sat out the hours till the stars began to pale, undisturbed by Lady Ravelgold, who, on the upper stair of the terrace, read by a small lamp, which, in the calm of that heavenly summer night, burned unflickeringly in the open air.

It was broad daylight when Tremlet, on foot, sauntered slowly past Hyde Park Corner on his way to the Albany. The lamps were still struggling with the brightening approach to

sunrise, the cabmen and their horses slept on the stand by the Green Park, and with cheerful faces, the labourers went to their work, and with haggard faces the night-birds of dissipation crept wearily home. The well-ground dust lay in confused heel-marks on the sidewalk, a little dampened by the night-dew; the atmosphere in the street was clear, as it never is after the stir of day commences; a dandy, stealing out from Crockford's, crossed Piccadilly, lifting up his head to draw in long breaths of the cool air, after the closeness of over-lighted rooms and excitement; and Tremlet, marking none of these things, was making his way through a line of carriages slowly drawing up to take off their wearied masters from a prolonged fête at Devonshire House, when a rude hand clapped him on the shoulder.

"Monsieur Tremlet!"

"*Ah, Baron! bien bon jour!*"

"*Bien rencontré, Monsieur!* You have insulted a lady to-night, who has confided her cause to my hands. Madam St. Leger, sir, is without a natural protector, and you have taken advantage of her position to insult her—grossly, Mr. Tremlet, grossly!"

Tremlet looked at the Russian during this extraordinary address, and saw that he was evidently excited with wine. He drew him aside into Berkeley Street, and in the calmest manner attempted to explain what was not very clear to himself. He had totally forgotten Mrs. St. Leger. The diplomat, though quite beyond himself with his excitement, had sufficient perception left to see the weak point of his statement; and, infuriated with the placid manner in which he attempted to excuse himself, suddenly struck his glove into his face, and turned upon his heel. They had been observed by a policeman, and at the moment that Tremlet, recovering from his astonishment, sprang forward to resent the blow, the grey-coated guardian of the place laid his hand upon his collar and detained him till the baron had disappeared.

More than once, on his way to the Albany, Tremlet surprised himself forgetting both the baron and the insult, and feeding his heart in delicious abandonment with the dreams of his new happiness. He reached his rooms and threw himself on the bed, forcing from his mind, with a strong effort, the presence of Lady Imogen, and trying to look calmly on the unpleasant circumstance before him. A quarrel, which

the day before he would have looked upon merely as an inconvenience, or which, under the insult of a blow, he would have eagerly sought, became now an almost insupportable evil. When he reflected on the subject of the dispute—a contention about a woman of doubtful reputation taking place in the same hour with a first avowal from the delicate and pure Lady Imogen—when he remembered the change in his fortunes, which he had as yet scarcely found time to realize—on the consequences to her who was so newly dear to him, and on all he might lose, now that life had become invaluable—his thoughts were almost too painful to bear. How seldom do men play with an equal stake in the game of taking life; and how strange it is that equality of weapons is the only comparison made necessary by the laws of honour!

Tremlet was not long the man to be undecided. He rose, after an hour's reflection, and wrote as follows:—

“BARON,—Before taking the usual notice of the occurrence of this morning, I wish to rectify one or two points in which our position is false. I find myself, since last night, the accepted lover of Lady Imogen Ravelgold, and the master of estates and title as a Count of the Russian empire. Under the *etourdissement* of such sudden changes in feelings and fortune, perhaps my forgetfulness of the lady, in whose cause you are so interested, admits of indulgence. At any rate, I am so newly in love with life, that I am willing to suppose, for an hour, that had you known these circumstances, you would have taken a different view of the offence in question. I shall remain at home till two, and it is in your power till then to make me the reparation necessary to my honour. Yours, etc.,

TREMLET.”

There was a bridal on the following Monday at St. George's Church, and the Russian secretary stood behind the bridegroom. Lady Ravelgold had never been seen so pale, but her face was clear of all painful feeling; and it was observed by one who knew her well, that her beauty had acquired, during the brief engagement of her daughter, a singular and undefinable elevation. As the carriages with their white favours turned into Bond Street, on their way back to Belgrave Square, the cortège was checked by the press of vehicles, and the Russian, who accompanied Lady Ravelgold in her chariot, found himself opposite the open *britscka* of a lady who fixed her glass full upon him without recognising a feature of his face.

"I am afraid you have affronted Mrs. St. Leger, Baron!" said Lady Ravelgold.

"Or I should not have been here!" said the Russian; and, as they drove up Piccadilly, he had just time, between Bond Street and Milton Crescent, to tell her ladyship the foregone chapter of this story.

The trulian, on that day, was fed with wedding-cake, and the wound on Mr. Tremlet's lip was not cured by letting alone.

KATE CREDIFORD.

I FOUND myself looking with some interest at the back of a lady's head. The theatre was crowded, and I had come in late, and the object of my curiosity, whoever she might be, was listening very attentively to the play. She did not move. I had time to build a life-time romance about her before I had seen a feature of her face. But her ears were small and of an exquisite oval, and she had that rarest beauty of woman—the hair arched and joined to the white neck with the same finish as on the temples. Nature often slights this part of her masterpiece.

The curtain dropped, and I stretched eagerly forward to catch a glimpse of her profile. But no! she sat next one of the slender pilasters, and, with her head leaned against it, remained immovable.

I left the box, and with some difficulty made my way into the crowded pit. Elbowing, apologising, perservering, I at last gained a point where I knew I could see my incognito at the most advantage. I turned—pshaw!—how was it possible I had not recognised her?

Kate Crediford!

There was no getting out again, for a while, at least, without giving offence to the crowd I had jostled so unceremoniously. I sat down—vexed—and commenced a desperate study of the figure of Shakspeare on the drop-curtain.

Of course I had been a lover of Miss Crediford's, or I could not have turned with indifference from the handsomest woman in the theatre. She was very beautiful—there was no disputing. But we love women a little for what we *do* know of them, and a great deal more for what we *do not*. I had love-read Kate Crediford to the last leaf. We parted as easily

as a reader and a book. Flirtation is a circulating library, in which we seldom ask twice for the same volume, and I gave up Kate to the next reader, feeling no property even in the marks I had made in her perusal. A little quarrel sufficed as an excuse for the closing of the book, and both of us studiously avoided a reconciliation.

As I sat in the pit, I remembered suddenly a mole on her left cheek, and I turned toward her with the simple curiosity to know whether it was visible at that distance. Kate looked sad. She still leaned immovable against the slight column, and her dark eyes, it struck me, were moist. Her mouth, with this peculiar expression upon her countenance, was certainly inexpressibly sweet—the turned-down corners ending in dimples, which in that particular place, I have always observed, are like wells of unfathomable melancholy. Poor Kate! what was the matter with her?

As I turned back to my dull study of the curtain, a little pettish with myself for the interest with which I had looked at an old flame, I detected half a sigh under my white waistcoat: but, instantly persuading myself that it was a disposition to cough—coughed—and began to hum “suoni la tromba.” The curtain rose, and the play went on.

It was odd that I never had seen Kate in that humor before. I did not think she could be sad. Kate Crediford sad! Why, she was the most volatile, light-hearted, care-for-nothing coquette that ever held up her fingers to be kissed. I wonder, has any one really annoyed you, my poor Kate! thought I. Could I by chance, be of any service to you—for, after all, I owe you something! I looked at her again.

Strange that I had ever looked at that face without emotion! The vigils of an ever-wakeful, ever-passionate, yet ever-tearful and melancholy spirit, seemed set, and kept under those heavy and motionless eyelids. And she, as I saw her now, was the very model and semblance of the character that I had all my life been vainly seeking! This was the creature I had sighed for, when turning away from the too mirthful tenderness of Kate Crediford! There was something new, or something for the moment mis-written, in that familiar countenance.

I made my way out of the pit with some difficulty, and returned to sit near her. After a few minutes, a gentleman in the next box rose, and left the seat vacant on the other side of

the pilaster against which she leaned. I went round while the orchestra were playing a loud march, and without being observed by the thoughtful beauty, seated myself in the vacant place.

Why did my eyes flush and moisten, as I looked upon the small white hand lying on the cushioned barrier between us! I knew every vein of it, like the strings of my own heart. I had held it spread out in my own, and followed its delicate blue traceries with a rose-stem, for hours and hours, while imploring, and reproaching, and reasoning over love's lights and shadows. I knew the feel of every one of those exquisite fingers—those rolled up rose-leaves, with nails like pieces cut from the lip of a shell! Oh, the promises I had kissed into oaths on that little *chef-d'œuvre* of nature's tinted alabaster! the psalms and sermons I had sat out, holding it, in her father's pew! the many a moon I had tired out of the sky, making of it a bridge for our hearts passing backward and forward! And how could that little wretch of a hand, that knew me better than its own other hand (for we had been more together), lie there, so unconscious of my presence? How could she—Kate Crediford—sit next to me as she was doing, with only a stuffed partition between us, and her head leaning on one side of a pilaster, and mine on the other, and never start, nor recognize, nor be at all aware of my neighbourhood? She was not playing a part, it was easy to see. Oh, I knew those little relaxed fingers too well! Sadness, indolent and luxurious sadness, was expressed in her countenance, and her abstraction was unfeigned and contemplative. Could she have so utterly forgotten me—magnetically that is to say?—Could the atmosphere about her, that would once have trembled betrayingly at my approach, like the fanning of an angel's invisible wing, have lost the sense of my presence?

I tried to magnetize her hand. I fixed my eyes on that little open palm, and with all the intensity I could summon, kissed it mentally in its rosy centre. I reproached the ungrateful little thing for its dulness and forgetfulness, and brought to bear upon it a focus of old memories of pressures and caresses, to which a stone would scarce have the heart to be insensible.

But I belie myself in writing this with a smile. I watched those unmoving fingers with a heart-ache. I could not see the face, nor read the thought, of the woman who had once

loved me, and who sat near me, now, so unconsciously—but, if a memory had stirred, if a pulse had quickened its beat, those finely-strung fingers, I well knew, would have trembled responsively. Had she forgotten me altogether? Is that possible? *Can* a woman close the leaves of her heart over a once-loved and deeply-written name, like the waves over a vessel's track—like the air over the division of a bird's flight?

I had intended to speak presently to Miss Crediford, but every moment the restraint became greater. I felt no more privileged to speak to her than the stranger who had left the seat I occupied. I drew back, for fear of encroaching on her room, or disturbing the folds of her shawl. I dared not speak to her. And, while I was arguing the matter to myself, the party who were with her, apparently tired of the play, arose and left the theatre, Kate following last, but unspoken to, and unconscious altogether of having been near any one whom she knew.

I went home and wrote to her all night, for there was no sleeping till I had given vent to this new fever of my heart. And, in the morning, I took the leading thoughts from my heap of incoherent scribbles, and embodied them more coolly in a letter:

“You will think, when you look at the signature, that this is to be the old story. And you will be as much mistaken as you are in believing that I was ever your lover, till a few hours ago. I have declared love to you, it is true. I have been happy with you, and wretched without you; I have thought of you, dreamed of you, haunted you, sworn to you, and devoted to you all and more than you exacted, of time and outward service and adoration; but I love you now for the first time in my life. Shall I be so happy as to make you comprehend this startling contradiction?”

“There are many chambers in the heart, Kate; and the spirits of some of us dwell, most fondly and secretly, in the chamber of tears—avowedly, however, in the outer and ever-open chamber of mirth. Over the sacred threshold, guarded by sadness, much that we select and smile upon, and follow with adulation in the common walks of life, never passes. We admire the gay. They make our melancholy sweeter by contrast, when we retire within ourselves. We pursue them. We take them to our hearts—to the outer vestibules of our hearts—and, if they are gay only, they are content with the

unconsecrated tribute which we pay them there. But the chamber within is, meantime, lonely. It aches with its desolation. The echo of the mirthful admiration without, jars upon its mournful silence. It longs for love, but love toned with its own sadness—love that can penetrate deeper than smiles ever came—love that, having once entered, can be locked in with its key of melancholy, and brooded over with the long dream of a life-time. But that deep-hidden and unseen chamber of the heart may be long untenanted. And, meantime, the spirit becomes weary of mirth and impatiently quenches the fire even upon its outer altar, and, in the complete loneliness of a heart that has no inmate or idol, gay or tearful, lives mechanically on.

“Do you guess at my meaning, Kate?—Do you remember the merriment of our first meeting? Do you remember in what a frolic of thoughtlessness you first permitted me to raise to my lips those restless fingers? Do you remember the mock condescension, the merry haughtiness, the rallying and feigned incredulity, with which you first received my successive steps of vowing and love-making—the arch look when it was begun, the laugh when it was over, the untiring follies we kept up, after vows plighted, and the future planned and sworn to? That you were in earnest, as much as you were capable of being, I fully believe. You would not else have been so prodigal of the sweet bestowings of a maiden’s tenderness. But how often have I left you, with the feeling, that, in the hours I had passed with you, my spirit had been alone! How often have I wondered if there were depths in my heart, which love can never reach!—how often mourned that, in the possession of love, there was no place allotted for its sweetest and dearest followers—tears and silence! Oh, Kate! sweet as was that sun-gleam of early passion, I did not love you! I tired of your smiles, waiting in vain for your sadness. I left you, and thought of you no more.

“And now—(and you will be surprised to know that I have been so near to you unperceived)—I have drank an intoxication from one glance into your eyes, which throws open to you every door of my heart, subdues to your control every nerve and feeling of my existence. Last night, I sat an hour, tracing again the transparent and well-remembered veins upon your hand, and oh! how the language written in those branching and mystic lines had changed in meaning and

power.—You were sad. I saw you from a distance, and, with amazement at an expression upon your face which I had never before seen, I came and sat near you. It was the look I had longed for when I knew you, and when tired of your mirth. It was the look I had searched the world for, combined with such beauty as yours. It was a look of tender and passionate melancholy, which revealed to me an unsuspected chamber in your heart—a chamber of tears. Ah, why were you never sad before? Why have we lost—why have I lost the eternity's worth of sweet hours, when you loved me with that concealed treasure in your bosom?—Alas! that angels must walk the world, unrecognized, till too late! Alas, that I have held in my arms, and pressed to my lips, and loosed again with trifling and weariness, the creature whom it was my life's errand, the thirst and passionate longing of my nature, to find and worship!

“Oh, Heaven! with what new value do I now number over your adorable graces of person! How spiritualized is every familiar feature, once so deplorably misappreciated!—How compulsive of respectful adoration is that flexible waist, that step of ærial lightness, that swan-like motion, which I once dared to praise, triflingly and half-mockingly, like the tints of a flower, or the chance beauty of a bird! And those bright lips! How did I ever look on them, and *not know*, that, within their rosy portal, slept, voiceless for a while, the controlling spell of my destiny—the tearful spirit followed and called in my dreams with perpetual longing? Strange value given to features and outward loveliness, by qualities within? Strange witchery of sadness in a woman! Oh, there is, in mirth and folly, dear Kate, no air for love's breathing—still less of food for constancy, or of holiness to consecrate and heighten beauty of person.

“What can I say else, except implore to be permitted to approach you—to offer my life to you—to begin, thus late, after being known so long, the worship which till death is your due? Pardon me if I have written abruptly and wildly. I shall await your answer in an agony of expectation. I do not willingly breathe till I see you—till I weep at your feet over my blindness and forgetfulness. Adieu! but let it not be for long, I pray you!”

I despatched this letter, and it would be difficult to embody in language the agony I suffered in waiting for a reply. I

walked my room, that endless morning, with a death-pang in every step—so fearful was I—so prophetically fearful—that I had forfeited for ever the heart I had once flung from me.

It was noon when a letter arrived. It was in a hand-writing new to me. But it was on the subject which possessed my existence, and it was of final import. It follows:—

“DEAR SIR,—My wife wishes me to write to you, and inform you of her marriage, which took place a week or two since, and of which she presumes you are not aware. She remarked to me, that you thought her looking unhappy last evening, when you chanced to see her at the play. As she seemed to regret not being able to answer your note herself, I may perhaps convey the proper apology by taking upon myself to mention to you, that, in consequence of eating an imprudent quantity of unripe fruit, she felt ill before going to the theatre, and was obliged to leave early. To-day she seems seriously indisposed. I trust she will be well enough to see you in a day or two, and remain, yours truly,

“SAMUEL SMITHERS.”

But I never called on Mrs. Samuel Smithers.

FLIRTATION AND FOX-CHASING.

“The only heart that I have known of late, has been an easy, excitable sort of gentleman, quickly roused and quickly calmed—sensitive enough to confer a great deal of pleasure, and not sensitive enough to give a moment’s pain. The heart of other days was a very different person indeed.”—BULWER.

I WAS moping one day in solitary confinement in quarantine at Malta, when, in a turn between my stone window and the back wall, I saw the yards of a vessel suddenly cross the light, and heard the next moment the rattle of a chain let go, and all the bustle of a merchantman coming to anchor. I had the privilege of promenading between two ring-bolts on the wharf below the lazaretto, and, with the attraction of a new-comer to the sleepy company of vessels under the yellow flag, I lost no time in descending the stone stairs, and was immediately joined by my vigilant sentinel, the *guardiano*, whose business it was to prevent my contact with the other visitors to the wharf. The *tricolor* flew at the peak of the stranger, and we easily made out that she was a merchantman from

Marseilles, subject therefore to a week's quarantine on account of the cholera. I had myself come from a plague port, Smyrna, and was subjected to twenty days' quarantine, six of which had passed; so that the Frenchman, though but beginning his imprisonment, was in a position comparatively enviable.

I had watched for an hour the getting of the vessel into mooring trim, and was beginning to conclude that she had come without passengers, when a gentleman made his appearance on deck, and the jolly-boat was immediately lowered and manned. A traveller's baggage was handed over the side, the gentleman took leave of the captain, and, in obedience to directions from the quarantine officer on the quarter-deck, the boat was pulled directly to the wharf on which I stood. The *guardiano* gave me a caution to retire a little, as the stranger was coming to take possession of the next apartment to my own, and must land at the stairs near by; but, before I had taken two steps backward, I began to recognize features familiar to me, and, with a turn of the head as he sprang on the wharf, the identity was established completely. Tom Berryman, by all that was wonderful! I had not seen him since we were suspended from college together, ten years before. Forgetting *lazaretto* and *guardiano*, and all the salt water between New Haven and Malta, I rushed up to Tom with the cordiality of other days, (a little sharpened by abstinence from society,) and we still had hold of hands with a firm grip, when the quarantine master gravely accosted us, and informed my friend that he had incurred an additional week by touching me—in short, that he must partake of the remainder of my quarantine.

Aghast and chapfallen as Berryman was, at the consequences of our rencontre, (for he had fully calculated on getting into Malta in time for the carnival,) he was somewhat reconciled to his lot by being permitted to share my room and table instead of living his week in solitude; and, by enriching our supplies a little from town, sleeping much, and chatting through the day in the rich sunshine of that climate of Paradise, we contrived to shove off the fortnight without any very intolerable tedium.

My friend and I had begun our travels differently—he taking England first, which I proposed visiting last. It is of course the *bonne bouche* of travel to everybody, and I was very curious to know Tom's experiences; and, as I was soon

bound thitherward, anxious to pick out of his descriptions some chart of the rocks and shoals in the "British channel" of society.

I should say, before quoting my friend, that he was a Kentuckian, with the manner (to ladies) of mingled devotion and nonchalance so popular with the sex, and a chivalric quality of man altogether. His father's political influence had obtained for him personal letters of introduction from the President, and, with this advantage, and his natural air of fashion, he had found no obstacle to choosing his society in England; choosing the first of course, like a true republican!

We were sitting on the water-steps with our feet immersed up to the ankles (in January too,) and in reply to some question of mine as to the approachability of noble ladies by such plebeian lovers as himself, Tom told me the story which follows. I take the names at random, of course, but in all else, I shall try to "tell the tale as 'twas told to me."

"Why, circumstances, as you know, sometimes put people in the attitude of lovers, whether they will or no; and it is but civil in such a case, to do what fate expects of you. I knew too much of the difference between crockery and porcelain to enter English society with the remotest idea of making love within the red book of the peerage, and though I've a story to tell, I swear I never put a foot forward till I thought it was knightly devoir; inevitable, though ever so ridiculous. Still, I must say, with a beautiful and unreserved woman beside one, very much like other beautiful and unreserved women, a republican might be pardoned for forgetting the invisible wall. '*Right Honourable*' loveliness has as much attraction about it, let me tell you, and is quite as difficult to resist, as loveliness that is honoured, right or wrong; and a man must be brought up to it, as Englishman are, to see the heraldic dragons and griffins in the air when a charming girl is talking to him.

"Why should a man whose blood is warm within,
Sit like (*her*) grandsire cut in alabaster?"

Eh? But to begin with the "*Tityre tu patulæ*."

I had been passing a fortnight at the hunting lodge of that wild devil, Lord —, in the Scotch Highlands, and, what with being freely wet outside every day, and freely wet inside every night, I had given my principle of life rather a disgust to its lodgings, and there were some symptoms of preparation

for leave-taking. Unwilling to be ill in a bachelor's den, with no solace tenderer than a dandy lord's tiger, I made a twilight flit to the nearest post-town, and, tightening my life-screws a little with the aid of the village apothecary, started southward the next morning with four posters.

I expected to be obliged to pull up at Edinboro', but the doctor's opiates, and abstinence and quiet, did more for me than I had hoped, and I went on very comfortably to Carlisle. I arrived at this place after nightfall, and found the taverns overflowing with the crowds of a Fair, and no bed to be had unless I could make one in a quartette of snoring graziers. At the same time there was a great political meeting at Edinboro', and every leg of a poster had gone north—those I had brought with me having been trans-hitched to a return chaise, and gone off while I was looking for accommodations.

Regularly stranded, I sat down by the tap-room fire, and was mourning my disaster, when the horn of the night-coach reached my ear, and, in the minute of its rattling up to the door, I hastily resolved that it was the least of two evils, and booked myself accordingly. There was but one vacant place, an outsider! With hardly time enough to resolve, and none to repent, I was presently rolling over the dark road, chilled to the bone in the first five minutes, and wet through with a "Scotch mist" in the next half hour. Somewhere about day-break we rolled into the little town of —, five miles from the seat of the Earl of Tresethen, to whose hospitalities I stood invited, and I went to bed in a most comfortable inn, and slept till noon.

Before going to bed I had written a note to be despatched to Tresethen castle, and the Earl's carriage was waiting for me when I awoke. I found myself better than I had expected, and dressing at once for dinner, managed to reach the castle just in time to hand in Lady Tresethen. Of that dinner I but remember that I was the only guest, and that the Earl regretted his daughter's absence from table, Lady Caroline having been thrown that morning from her horse. I fainted somewhere about the second remove, and recovered my wits some days after, on the safe side of the crisis of a fever.

I shall never forget that first half hour of conscious curiosity. An exquisite sense of bodily repose, mingled with a vague notion of recent relief from pain, made me afraid to speak lest I should awake from a dream, yet, if not a dream, what a de-

licious reality! A lady of most noble presence, in a half-mourning dress, sat by the side of a cheerful fire, turning her large dark eyes on me, in the pauses of a conversation with a grey-headed servant. My bed was of the most sumptuous luxury; the chamber was hung with pictures and draped with spotless white; the table covered with the costliest elegancies of the toilet; and, in the gentle and deferential manner of the old liveried menial, and the subdued tones of inquiry by the lady, there was a refinement and tenderness which, with the keen susceptibility of my senses, "lapt me in Elysium." I was long in remembering where I was. The lady glided from the room, the old servant resumed his seat by my bedside, other servants in the same livery came softly in on errands of service, and, at the striking of the half-hour by a clock on the mantelpiece, the lady returned, and I was raised to receive something from her hand. As she came nearer, I remembered the Countess Tresethen.

Three days after this I was permitted to take the air of a conservatory which opened from the Countess's boudoir. My old attendant assisted me to dress, and, with another servant, took me down in a *fauteuil*. I was in slippers and robe-de-chambre, and presumed that I should see no one except the kind and noble lady Tresethen, but I had scarce taken one turn up the long alley of flowering plants, when the Countess came toward me from the glass door beyond, and on her arm a girl leaned for support, whose beauty——

(Here Tom dabbled his feet for some minutes in the water in silence.)

God bless me! I can never give you an idea of it! It was a new revelation of woman to me; the opening of an eighth seal. In the minute occupied by her approach, my imagination (accelerated, as that faculty always is, by the clairvoyance of sickness), had gone through a whole drama of love—fear, adoration, desperation, and rejection—and, so complete was it, that in after moments, when these phases of passion came round in the proper lapse of days and weeks, it seemed to me that I had been through with them before; that it was all familiar; that I had met and loved, in some other world, this same glorious creature, with the same looks, words, and heart-ache; in the same conservatory of bright flowers, and, faith! myself in the same pattern of a brocade dressing-gown!

Heavens! what a beautiful girl was that Lady Caroline!

Her eyes were of a light grey, the rim of the lids perfectly inky with the darkness of the long sweeping lashes, and in her brown hair there was a gold lustre that seemed somehow to illuminate the curves of her small head like a halo. Her mouth had too much character for a perfectly agreeable first impression. It was nobility and sweetness educated over native high spirit and scornfulness—the nature shining through the transparent blood, like a flaw through enamel. She would have been, in other circumstances, a maid of Saragossa or a Gertrude Von Wart; a heroine; perhaps a devil. But her fascination was resistless!

“My daughter,” said Lady Tresethen (and in that beginning was all the introduction she thought necessary), “is like yourself, an invalid just escaped from the doctor; you must congratulate each other. Are you strong enough to lend her an arm, Mr. Berryman?”

The Countess left us, and, with the composure of a sister who had seen me every day of my life, Lady Caroline took my arm and strolled slowly to and fro, questioning me of my shooting at the lodge, and talking to me of her late accident, her eyes sometimes fixed upon her little embroidered slippers, as they peeped from her snowy morning dress, and sometimes indolently raised and brought to bear on my flushed cheek and trembling lips; her singular serenity operating upon me as anything but a sedative! I was taken up stairs again, after an hour's conversation, in a fair way for a relapse, and the doctor put me under embargo again for another week, which, spite of all the renewed care and tenderness of Lady Tresethen, seemed to me an eternity! I'll not bother you with what I felt and thought all that time!

It was a brilliant autumnal day when I got leave to make my second exodus, and with the doctor's permission I prepared for a short walk in the park. I declined the convoy of the old servant, for I had heard Lady Caroline's horse gallop away down the avenue, and I wished to watch her return unobserved. I had just lost sight of the castle in the first bend of the path, when I saw her quietly walking her horse under the trees at a short distance, and, the moment after, she observed and came towards me at an easy canter. I had schooled myself to a little more self-possession, but I was not prepared for such an apparition of splendid beauty as that woman on horseback. She rode an Arabian bay of the finest blood; a lofty,

fiery, matchless creature, with an expression of eye and nostril which I could not but think a proper *pendant* to her own, limbed as I had seldom seen a horse, and his arched neck, and forehead, altogether, proud as a steed for Lucifer. She sat on him as if it were a throne she was born to, and the flow of her riding-dress seemed as much a part of him as his mane. He appeared ready to bound into the air, like Pegasus, but one hand calmly stroked his mane, and her face was as tranquil as marble.

"Well met!" she said; I was just wishing for a cavalier. What sort of a horse would you like, Mr. Berryman? Ellis," (speaking to her groom), "is old Curtal taken up from grass?"

"Yes, miladi!"

"Curtal is our invalid horse, and as you are not very strong, perhaps his easy pace will be best for you. Bring him out directly, Ellis. We'll just walk along the road a little way; for I must show you my Arabian; and we'll not go back to ask mamma's permission, for we shouldn't get it! You won't mind riding a little way, will you?"

Of course I would have bestrided a hippogriff at her bidding, and when the groom came out, leading a thorough-bred hunter, with apparently a very elastic and gentle action, I forgot the doctor, and mounted with great alacrity. We walked our horses slowly down the avenue and out at the castle gate, followed by the groom, and, after trying a little quicker pace on the public road, I pronounced old Curtal worthy of her ladyship's eulogium, and her own Saladin worthy, if horse could be worthy, of his burthen.

We had ridden perhaps a mile, and Lady Caroline was giving me a slight history of the wonderful feats of the old veteran under me, when the sound of a horn made both horses prick up their ears, and, on rising a little acclivity, we caught sight of a pack of hounds coming across the fields directly towards us, followed by some twenty red-coated horsemen. Old Curtal trembled and showed a disposition to fret, and I observed that Lady Caroline dexterously lengthened her own stirrup and loosened the belt of her riding-dress, and the next minute the hounds were over the hedge, and the horsemen, leap after leap, after them, and, with every successive jump, my own steed reared and plunged unmanageably.

"Indeed, I cannot stand this!" cried Lady Caroline, gathering up her reins, "Ellis! see Mr. Berryman home!" and away

went the flying Arabian over the hedge with a vault that left me breathless with astonishment. One minute I made the vain effort to control my own horse, and turn his head in the other direction, but my strength was gone. I had never leaped a fence in my life on horseback, though a tolerable rider on the road; but before I could think how it was done, or gather myself together for the leap, Curtal was over the hedge with me, and flying across the ploughed field like the wind—Saladin not far before him. With a glance ahead I saw the red coats rising into the air and disappearing over another green hedge, and though the field was crossed in twenty leaps, I had time to feel my blood run cold with the prospect of describing another parabola in the air, and to speculate on the best attitude for a projectile on horseback. Over went Saladin like a greyhound, but his mistress's riding cap caught the wind at the highest point of the curve, and flew back into my face as Curtal rose on his haunches, and over I went again, blinded and giddy, and, with the cap held flat against my bosom by the pressure of the air, flew once more at a tremendous pace onward. My feet were now plunged to the instep in the stirrups, and my back, too weak to support me erect, let me down to my horse's mane, and, one by one, along the skirt of a rising woodland, I could see the red coats dropping slowly behind. Right before me like a meteor, however, streamed back the loosened tresses of Lady Caroline, and Curtal kept close on the track of Saladin, neither losing nor gaining an inch apparently, and nearer and nearer sounded the baying of the hounds, and clearer became my view of the steady and slight waist riding so fearlessly onward. Of my horse I had neither guidance nor control. He needed none. The hounds had crossed a morass, and we were rounding a half-circle on an acclivity to come up with them, and Curtal went at it too confidently to be in error. Evenly as a hand-gallop on a green sward his tremendous pace told off, and if his was the ease of muscular power, the graceful speed of the beautiful creature moving before me seemed the aerial buoyancy of a bird. Obstructions seemed nothing. That flowing dress and streaming hair sailed over rocks and ditches, and over them, like their inseparable shadow, glided I, and, except one horseman who still kept his distance ahead, we seemed alone in the field. The clatter of hoofs, and the exclamations of excitement had ceased behind me, and though I was capable of no exer-

tion beyond that of keeping my seat, I no longer feared the leap nor the pace, and began to anticipate a safe termination to my perilous adventure. A slight exclamation from Lady Caroline reached my ear and I looked forward. A small river was before us, and, from the opposite bank of steep clay, the rider who had preceded us was falling back, his horse's fore-feet high in the air, and his arms already in the water. I tried to pull my reins. I shouted to my horse in desperation. And, with the exertion, my heart seemed to give way within me. Giddy and faint, I abandoned myself to my fate. I just saw the flying heels of Saladin planted on the opposite bank, and the streaming hair still flying onward, when, with a bound that, it seemed to me, must rend every fibre of the creature beneath me, I saw the water gleam under my feet, and still I kept on. We flew over a fence into a stubble field, the hounds just before us, and over a gate into the public highway, which we followed for a dozen bounds, and then, with a pace slightly moderated, we successively cleared a low wall and brought up, on our horse's haunches, in the midst of an uproar of dogs, cows, and scattering poultry—the fox having been run down at last in the inclosure of a barn. I had just strength to extricate my feet from the stirrups, take Lady Caroline's cap, which had kept its place between my elbows and knees, and present it to her as she sat in her saddle, and my legs gave way under me. I was taken into the farmhouse, and, at the close of a temporary ellipse, I was sent back to Tresethen Castle in a post-chaise, and once more handed over to the doctor!

Well, my third siege of illness was more tolerable, for I received daily, now, some message of inquiry or some token of interest from Lady Caroline, though I learned from the Countess that she was in sad disgrace for her inveiglement of my trusting innocence. I also received the cards of the members of the hunt, with many inquiries complimentary to what they were pleased to consider American horsemanship, and I found that that my seizure of the flying cap of Lady Caroline and presentation of it to her Ladyship at "the death," was thought to be worthy, in chivalry of Bayard, and in dexterity of Ducrow. Indeed, when let out again to the convalescent walk in the conservatory, I found that I was counted a hero even by the stately Earl. There slipped a compliment, too, here and there, through the matronly disapprobation of Lady Tresethen—and all this was too pleasant to put aside with a

disclaimer—so I bid truth and modesty hold their peace, and took the honour the gods chose to provide.

But now came dangers more perilous than my ride on Curtal. Lady Caroline was called upon to be kind to me! Daily as the old servant left me in the alley of japonicas, she appeared from the glass door of her mother's boudoir and devoted herself to my comfort—walking with me, while I could walk, in those fragrant and balmy avenues of flowers, and then bringing me into her mother's luxurious apartment, where books, and music, and conversation as frank and untrammelled as man in love could ask, wiled away the day. Wiled it away!—winged it—shod it with velvet and silence, for I never knew how it passed! Lady Caroline had a mind, of the superiority stamped so unconsciously on her lip. She anticipated no consequences from her kindness, therefore she was playful and unembarrassed. She sang to me, and I read to her. Her rides were given up, and Saladin daily went past the window to his exercise, and, with my most zealous scrutiny, I could detect in her face neither impatience of confinement nor regret at the loss of weather fitter for pleasures out of doors. Spite of every caution with which hope could be chained down, I was flattered.

You smile—(Tom said, though he was looking straight into the water, and had not seen my face for half an hour)—but, without the remotest hope of taking Lady Caroline to Kentucky, or of becoming English on the splendid dowry of the heiress of Tresethen, I still felt it impossible to escape from my lover's attitude—impossible to avoid hoarding up symptoms, encouragements, flatteries, and all the moonshine of amatory anxiety. I was in love—and who reasons in love?

One morning, after I had become an honorary patient—an invalid only by sufferance—and was slowly admitting the unwelcome conviction that it was time for me to be shaping my adieux—the conversation took rather a philosophical turn. The starting point was a quotation, in a magazine, from Richter: "Is not a man's universe *within* his head, whether a king's diadem or a torn scull-cap be *without*!"—and I had insisted rather strenuously on the levelling privilege we enjoyed in the existence of a second world around us—the world of reverie and dream—wherein the tyranny, and check, and the arbitrary distinctions of the world of fact were never felt—and where he, though he might be a peasant, who had the consci-

ousness in his soul that he was a worthy object of love to a princess, could fancy himself beloved and revel in imaginary possession.

"Why," said I, turning with a sudden flush of self-confidence to Lady Caroline, "Why should not the passions of such a world, the loving and returning of love *in fancy*, have the privilege of language? Why should not matches be made, love confessed, vows exchanged, and fidelity sworn, valid within the realm of dreamland only? Why should I not say to you, for example, I adore you, dear lady, and in my world of thought you shall, if you so condescend, be my bride and mistress; and why, if you responded to this, and listened to my vows of fancy, should your bridegroom of the world of fact feel his rights invaded?"

"In fancy let it be then!" said Lady Caroline, with a blush and a covert smile, and she rang the bell for luncheon.

Well—I still lingered a couple of days, and, on the last day of my stay at Tresethen, I became sufficiently emboldened to take Lady Caroline's hand, behind the fountain of the conservatory, and to press it to my lips with a daring wish that its warm pulses belonged to the world of fancy.

She withdrew it very kindly, and (I thought) sadly, and begged me to go to the boudoir and bring her a volume of Byron that lay on her work-table.

I brought it, and she turned over the leaves a moment, and, with her pencil, marked two lines and gave me the book, bidding me an abrupt good morning. I stood a few minutes with my heart beating and my brain faint, but finally summoned courage to read:—

"I cannot lose a world for thee—

But would not lose thee for the world!"

I left Tresethen the next morning, and—

"Hold on, Tom!" cried I—"there comes the boat with our dinner from Valetta, and we'll have your sorrows over our Burgundy."

"Sorrows!" exclaimed Tom, "I was going to tell you of the fun I had at her wedding!"

"Lord preserve us!"

"Bigamy—wasn't it?—after our little nuptials in dreamland! She told her husband all about it at the wedding breakfast, and his lordship (she married the Marquis of —) begged to know the extent of *my* prerogatives. I was sorry

to confess that they did not interfere very particularly with *his*!"

BEWARE OF DOGS AND WALTZING.

THE birds that flew over County Surrey on the 12th of June, 1845, looked down upon a scene of which many a "lord of creation," travelling only by the roads, might well have envied them the seeing. For, ever so merry let it be *within* the lordly parks of England, the trees that look over the ring fence upon the world *without*, keep their countenance—aristocrats that they are! Round and round Beckton Park you might have travelled that sunny day, and often within arrow-shot of its hidden and fairy lawn, and never suspected, but by the magnetic tremor in your veins, that beautiful women were dancing near by, and "marvellous proper men," more or less enamoured, looking on—every pink and blue girdle a noose for a heart, of course, and every gay waistcoat a victim venturing near the trap (though this last is mentioned entirely on my own responsibility).

But what have we to do with the unhappy exiles *without* this pretty Paradise. You are an invited guest, dear reader. Pray walk in!

Did you ask about the Becktons? The Becktons are people blessed with money and a very charming acquaintance. That is enough to know about them. Yet, stay. Sir Thomas was knighted for his behaviour at some great crisis in India (for he made his fortune in India)—and Lady Beckton is no great beauty, but she has the mania of getting handsome people together, and making them happier than belongs properly to handsome people's destiny. And this, I think, must suffice for a first introduction.

The lawn, as you see, has the long portico of the house on one side of it, a bend of the river on two other sides, and a thick shrubbery on the fourth. The dancing-floor is in the centre, inlaid at the level of the smooth sward, and it is just now vibrating to the measured step of the mazurka—beautifully danced, we *must* say!

And now let me point out to you the persons most concerned in this gossip of mine.

First, the ladies.

Miss Blakeney—(and she was never called anything but

Miss Blakeney, never Kate, or Kitty, or Kathleen, I mean, though her name was Catherine)—Miss Blakeney is that very stylish, very striking, very magnificent girl, I think I may say, with the white chip hat and black feather. Nobody but Miss Blakeney could venture to wear just the dress she is sporting, but she must dash, though she is in half-mourning, and, faith! there is nothing out of keeping, artistically speaking, after all. A white dress embroidered with black flowers, dazzling white shoulders turned over with black lace, white neck and forehead (brilliantly white), waved over and kissed by luxuriant black ringlets (brilliantly black!); and very white temples with very black eyes, and very white eyelids with long black lashes; and, since those dazzling white teeth were without a contrast, there hung upon her neck a black cross of ebony. And now we have put her in black and white, where she will “stay put.” *Scripta verba manent*, saith the cautionary proverb.

Here and there, you observe, there is a small Persian carpet spread on the sward for those who like to lounge and look at the dancers, and though a score of people, at least, are availing themselves of this oriental luxury, no one looks so modestly pretty, half couched on the richly-coloured woof, as that simply-dressed blonde, with a straw hat in her lap, and her light auburn curls taking their saucy will of her blue-veined neck and shoulders. That lady's plain name is Mabel Brown, and, like yourself, many persons have wished to change it for her. She is half married, indeed, to several persons here present, for there is *one* consenting party, *mais l'autre ne veut pas*, as a French novelist laments it, stating a similar dilemma. Meantime, Miss Brown is the adopted sister of the black and white Miss Blakeney.

One more exercise of my function of *cicerone*!

Lying upon the bank of the river, with his shoulder against that fine oak, and apparently deeply absorbed in the fate of the acorn-cups which he throws into the current, you may survey the elegant person of Mr. Lindsay Maud—a gentleman whom I wish you to take for rather more than his outer seeming, since he will show you, at the first turn of his head, that he cares nothing for your opinion, though entitled, as the diplomatists phrase it, to your “high consideration.” Mr. Maud is twenty-five, more or less, six feet or thereabouts. He has the sanguineous tint, rather odd for so phlegmatic a

person as he seems. His nose is *un petit peu rétroussé*, his lips full, and his smile easy and ready. His eyes are like the surface of a very deep well. Curling brown hair, broad and calm forehead, merry chin with a dimple in it, and mouth expressive of great good humour, and quite enough of fastidiousness. If this is not your beau idéal, I am very sorry, but experience went to show that Lindsay Maud was a very agreeable man, and pleased generally where he undertook it.

And now, if you please, having done the honours, I will take up the story *en simple conteur*.

The sky was beginning to blush about the sun's going to bed, and the dancers and archers were pairing off, couple by couple, to stroll and cool in the dim shrubberies of Beckton Park. It was an hour to breakfast, so called, for breakfast was to be served in the darker edge of the twilight. With the aforementioned oak-tree between him and the gay company, Mr. Lindsay Maud beguiled his hunger (for hungry he was), by reading a volume of that very clever novel, "*Le Père Goriot*," and, chapter by chapter, he cocked up his ear, as the story books say, hoping to hear the cheerful bell of the tower announce the serving of the soup and champagne.

"Well, Sir Knight Faineant," said Lady Beckton, stepping in suddenly between his feet and the river brink, "since when have you turned woman-hater, and enrolled among the unavailables? Here have you lain all day in the shade, with scores of nice girls dancing on the other side of your hermit tree, and not a sign of life—not a look even to see whether my party, got up with so much pains, flourished or languished! I'll cross you out of my little book, recreant!"

Maud was by this time on his feet, and he penitently and respectfully kissed the fingers threateningly held up to him—for the unpardonable sin, in a single man, is to appear unamused, let alone failing to amuse others, at a party sworn to be agreeable.

"I have but half an apology," he said, "that of knowing that your parties go swimmingly off, whether I pull an oar or no; but I deserve not the less to be crossed out of your book. Something ails me. I am growing old, or my curiosity has burnt out, or I am touched with some fatal lethargy. Upon my word, I would as lief listen to a Latin sermon, as chat for the next half hour with the prettiest girl at Beckton! There is no inducement, my dear Lady Beckton. I'm not a marry-

ing man, you know, and flirtation—flirtation is such tiresome repetition—endless reading of prefaces, and never coming to the agreeable first chapter. But I'll obey orders. Which is the destitute woman? You shall see how I will redeem my damaged reputation!"

But Lady Beckton, who seldom refused an offer from a beau to make himself useful at her parties, seemed hardly to listen to Maud's justification. She placed her arm in his, and led him across the bridge which spanned the river a little above, and they were presently out of hearing in one of the cool and shaded avenues of the park.

"A penny for your thought!" said Maud, after walking at her side a few minutes in silence.

"It is a thought, certainly, in which pennies are concerned," replied Lady Beckton, "and that is why I find any trouble in giving expression to it. It is difficult enough to talk with gentlemen about love, but that is easy to talking about money."

"Yet they make a pretty tandem, money on the lead!"

"Oh! are you there?" exclaimed Lady Beckton, with a laugh; "I was beginning too far back, altogether! My dear Lindsay, see how much better I thought of you than you deserved! I was turning over in my mind, with great trepidation and embarrassment, how I should venture to talk to you about a money-and-love match!"

"Indeed! for what happy man?"

"*Toi-même, mon ami!*"

"Heavens! you quite take away my breath! Spare yourself the overture, my dear Lady Beckton! I agree! I am quite ready—sold from this hour if you can produce a purchaser, and possession given immediately!"

"Now you go too fast; for I have not time to banter, and I wish to see my way in earnest before I leave you. Listen to me. I was talking you over with Beckton this morning. I'll not trouble you with the discussion—it would make you vain, perhaps. But we arrived at this: Miss Blakeney would be a very good match for you, and, if you are inclined to make a demonstration that way, why, we will do what we can to make it plain sailing. Stay with us a week, for instance, and we will keep the Blakeney. It's a sweet month for pairing, and you are an expeditious love-maker, I know. Is it agreed?"

"You are quite serious?"

"Quite!"

"I'll go back with you to the bridge, kindest of friends, and return and ramble here till the bell rings by myself. I'll find you at table, by-and-by, and express my gratitude at least. Will that be time enough for an answer?"

"Yes—but no ceremony with me! Stay and ponder where you are! *Au revoir!* I must see after my breakfast!"

And away tripped the kind-hearted Lady Beckton.

Maud resumed his walk. He was rather taken aback. He knew Miss Blakeney but as a waltzing partner, yet that should be but little matter; for he had long ago made up his mind that, if he did not marry rich, he could not marry at all.

Maud was poor—that is to say, he had all that an angel would suppose necessary in this hungry and cold world—assurance of food and clothing—in other words, three hundred a year. He had had his unripe time like other youths, in which he was ready to marry for love and no money; but his timid advances at that soft period had not been responsibly met by his first course of sweethearts, and he had congratulated himself, and put a price upon his heart accordingly. Meantime, he thought, the world is a very entertaining place, and the belonging to nobody in particular has its little advantages.

And very gaily sped on the second epoch of Mr. Lindsay Maud's history. He lived in a country where, to shine in a profession requires the "*audace patience et volonté de quoi renverser le monde,*" and, having turned his ambition well about, like a strange coin that might perhaps have passed current in other times, he laid it away, with romance and chivalry, and other things suited only to the cabinets of the curious. He was well born, he was well bred. He was a fair candidate for the honours of a "gay man about town"—that untaxed exempt—that guest by privilege—irresponsible denizen of high life, possessed of every luxury on earth except matrimony and the pleasures of payment. And, for a year or two, this was very delightful. He had a half dozen of those charming female friendships which, like other ephemera in this changing world, must die or turn into something else at the close of a season, and, if this makes the feelings very hard, it makes the manners very soft; and Maud was content with the compensation. If he felt, now and then, that he was idling life away, he looked about him and found

countenance at least; for all his friends were as idle, and there was an analogy to his condition in nature (if need were to find one), for the butterfly had his destiny like the bee, and was neither pitied nor reproached that he was not an honey-maker.

But Maud was now in a third lustrum of his existence, and it was tinted somewhat differently from the rose-coloured epochs precedent. The twilight of satisfied curiosity had fallen imperceptibly around him. The inner veils of society had, one by one lifted, and there could be nothing new for his eye in the world to which he belonged.

A gay party, which was once to him as full of unattained objects as the festal mysteries of Eleusinia to a rustic worshipper of Ceres, was now as readable at a glance as the stripes of a backgammon-board. He knew every man's pretensions and chances, every woman's expectations and defences. Not a damsel whose defects he had not discovered, whose mind he had not sounded, whose dowry he did not know; not a beauty, married or single, whose nightly game in society he could not perfectly foretell; not an affection unoccupied of which he could not put you down the cost of engaging it in your favour, the chances of constancy, the dangers of following or abandoning. He had no stake in society, meantime, yet society itself was all his world. He had no ambitions to further by its aid. And, until now, he had looked on matrimony as a closed door—for he had neither property, nor profession likely to secure it, and circumstances like these, in the rank in which he moved, are comprehended among the "any impediments." To have his own way, Maud would have accepted no invitations except to dine with the *beaux esprits*, and he would have concentrated the remainder of his leisure and attentions upon one agreeable woman (at a time)—two selfishnesses very attractive to a *blasé*, but not permitted to any member of society short of a Duke or a Cæsar.

And now, with a new leaf turning over in his dull book of life—a morning of a new day breaking on his increasing night—Lindsay Maud tightly screwed his arms across his breast, and paced the darkening avenue of Beckton Park. The difference between figuring as a fortune-hunter, and having a fortune hunted for him by others, he perfectly understood. In old and aristocratic societies, where wealth is at the same time so much more coveted and so much more

difficult to win, the eyes of "envy, malice, and all uncharitableness," are alike an omnipresent Argus, in their watch over the avenues to its acquisition. No step, the slightest, the least suspicious, is ever taken toward the hand of an heiress, or the attainment of an inheritance, without the awakening and counter working of these busy monsters; and, for a society-man, better to be a gambler or seducer, better to have all the fashionable vices ticketed on his name, than to stand *affixed* as a fortune hunter. If to have a fortune cleverly put within reach by a powerful friend, however, be a proportionate beatitude, blessed was Maud. So thought he, at least, as the merry bell of Beckton tower sent its summons through the woods, and his reverie gave place to thoughts of something more substantial.

And thus far, oh adorable reader! (for I see what unfathomable eyes are looking over my shoulder) thus far, like an artist making a sketch, of which one part is to be finished, I have dwelt a little on the touches of my pencil. But, by those same unfathomable eyes I know (for in those depths dwell imagination,) that, if the remainder be done ever so lightly in outline, even then there will be more than was needed for the comprehension of the story. Thy ready and boundless fancy, sweet lady, would supply it all. Given, the characters and scene, what fair creature who has loved, could fail to picture forth the sequel and its more minute surroundings, with rapidity and truth daguerreotypical?

Sketchily, then, touch we the unfinished *dénouement* of our story.

The long saloon was already in glittering progress when Maud entered. The servants in their blue and white liveries were gliding rapidly about, with the terrestrial nutriment for eyes celestial—to wit, wines and oysters.

Half blinded with the glare of the numberless lights, he stood a moment at the door.

"Lady Beckton's compliments, and she has reserved a seat for you!" said a footman approaching him.

He glanced at the head of the table. The vacant chair was near Lady Beckton and *opposite* Miss Blakeney. "Is a *vis-à-vis* better for love-making than a seat at the lady's ear?" thought Maud. But Lady Beckton's tactics were to spare his ear and dazzle his eye, without reference especially to the corresponding impressions on the eyes and ear of the

lady. And she had the secondary object of avoiding any betrayal of her designs till they were too far matured to be defeated by publicity.

"Can you tell me, Mr. Maud," said the sweet voice of Mabel Brown, as he drew his chair to the table, "what is the secret of Lady Beckton's putting you next me so pertinaciously?"

"A greater regard for my happiness than yours, probably," said Maud; "but why 'pertinaciously?' Has there been a skirmish for this particular chair?"

"No skirmish, but three attempts at seizure by three of my admirers."

"If they admire you more than I, they are fitter companions for a *tête-à-tête* than a crowded party," said Maud. "I am as near a lover as I can be, and be agreeable!"

To this Maud expected the gay retort due to a bagatelle of gallantry; but the pretty Mabel was silent. The soup disappeared and the *entremets* were served. Maud was hungry, and he had sent a cutlet and a glass of Johannisberg to the clamorous quarter before he ventured to look toward his hostess.

He felt her eyes upon him. A covert smile stole through her lips as they exchanged glances.

"Yes?" she asked, with a meaning look.

"Yes!"

And, in that dialogue of two monosyllables, Lady Beckton presumed that the hand and five thousand a year of Miss Catherine Blakeney, were virtually made over to Mr. Lindsay Maud. And her diplomacy made play to that end, without farther deliberation.

Very unconscious indeed that she was under the eye of the man who had entered into a conspiracy to become her husband, Miss Blakeney sat between a guardsman and a diplomatist, carrying on the war in her usual trenchant and triumphant fashion. She looked exceedingly handsome—that Maud could not but admit. With no intention of becoming responsible for her manners, he would even have admired, as he often had done, her skilful coqueties and adroit displays of the beauty with which nature had endowed her. She succeeded, Maud thought, in giving both of her admirers the apparent preference (apparent to themselves, that is to say), and, considering her *vis-à-vis* worth a chance shaft at least, she honoured that very attentive gentleman with such occasional notice, as, under other circumstances, would

have been far from disagreeable. It might have worn a better grace, however, coming from simple Miss Blakeney. From the future Mrs. Lindsay Maud, he could have wished those pretty veilements very much reduced and modified.

At his side, the while, sweet Mabel Brown carried on with him a conversation, which, to the high tone of merriment opposite, was like the intermitted murmur of a brook heard in the pauses of merry instruments. At the same time that nothing brilliant or gay seemed to escape her notice, she toned her own voice and flow of thought, so winningly below the excitement around her, that Maud who was sensible of every indication of superiority could not but pay her a silent tribute of admiration. "If this were but the heiress!" he ejaculated inwardly. But Mabel Brown was a dependant.

Coffee was served.

The door at the end of the long saloon was suddenly thrown open, and, as every eye turned to gaze into the blazing ball-room, a march, with the full power of the band, burst upon the ear.

The diplomatist who had been sitting at the side of Miss Blakeney was a German, and a waltzer *comme il y en a peu*. At the bidding of Lady Beekton, he put his arm around the waist of the heiress, and bore her away to the delicious music of Strauss, and, by general consent, the entire floor was left to this pair for a dozen circles. Miss Blakeney was passionately fond of waltzing, and built for it, like a Baltimore clipper for running close to the wind. If she had a fault that her friends were afraid to jog her memory about, it was the wearing her dresses a flounce too short. Her feet and ankles were Fenella's own, while her figure and breezy motion would have stolen Endymion from Diana. She waltzed too well for a lady—all but well enough for a *première danseuse de l'opera*. Lady Beekton was a shrewd woman, but she made a mistake in crying "*encore!*" when this single couple stopped from their admired *pas de deux*. She thought Maud was just the man to be captivated by that display. But the future Mrs. Lindsay Maud must *not* have ankles for general admiration. Oh, no!

Maud wished to efface the feeling this exhibition had caused by sharing in the excitement.

"Miss Brown," he said, as two or three couples went off, "permit me the happiness of one turn!" and, scarce waiting for an answer, he raised his arm to encircle her waist.

Mabel took his hands, and playfully laid them across each other on his own breast in an attitude of resignation.

"I never waltz," she said. "But don't think me a prude! I don't consider it wrong in those who think it right."

"But with this music tugging at your heels!" said Maud, who did not care to express how much he admired the delicacy of her distinction.

"Ah, with a husband or a brother I should think one could scarce resist bounding away; but I cannot——"

"Cannot what?—cannot take me for either?" interrupted Maud, with an air of affected malice that covered a very strong desire to ask the question in earnest.

She turned her eyes suddenly upon him with a rapid look of inquiry, and, slightly colouring, fixed her attention silently on the waltzers.

Lady Beckton came, making her way through the crowd. She touched Maud on the arm.

"'Hold hook and line!'—is it not?" she said, in a whisper. After an instant's hesitation, Maud answered, "Yes!"—but pages often would not suffice to express all that passes through the mind in "an instant's hesitation." All Lindsay Maud's prospects and circumstances were reviewed in that moment; all his many steps by which he had arrived at the conclusion that marriage with him *must* be a matter of *convenience* merely; all his put-down impulses and built-up resolutions; all his regrets, consolations, and offsets; all his better and worser feelings; all his former loves (and in that connexion, strangely enough, Mabel Brown); all his schemes, in short, for smothering his pain in the sacrifice of his heart, and making the most of the gain to his pocket, passed before him in that half minute's review. But he said "Yes!"

The Blakeney carriage was dismissed that night with orders to bring certain dressing-maids, and certain sequents of that useful race, on the following morning to Beckton Park, and the three persons who composed the Blakeney party, an old aunt, Miss Blakeney, and Mabel Brown, went quietly to bed under the hospitable roof of Lady Beckton.

How describe (and what need of it, indeed!) a week at an English country-house, with all its age of chances for loving and hating, its eternity of opportunities for all that hearts can have to regulate in this shorthand life of ours? Let us come at once to the closing day of this visit.

Maud lay late abed on the day that the Blakenys were to

leave Beckton Park. Fixed from morning till night in the firm resolution at which he had arrived with so much trouble and self-control, he was dreaming from night till morning of a felicity in which Miss Blakeney had little share. He wished the marriage could be all achieved in the signing of a bond. He found that he had miscalculated his philosophy in supposing that he could venture to loose thought and reverie upon the long-forbidden subject of marriage. In all the scenes eternally being conjured up to his fancy—scenes of domestic life—the bringing of Miss Blakeney into the picture was an after effort. Mabel Brown stole into it spite of himself—the sweetest and dearest feature of that enchanting picture in its first warm colouring by the heart. But, day by day, he took the place assigned him by Lady Beckton at the side of Miss Blakeney, riding, driving, dining, strolling, with reference to being near her only, and still scarce an hour could pass in which, spite of all effort to the contrary, he did not betray his passionate interest in Mabel Brown.

He arose and breakfasted. Lady Beckton and the young ladies were bonnetted and ready for a stroll in the park woods, and her Ladyship came and whispered in Maud's ear, as he leaned over his coffee, that he must join them presently, and that she had prepared Miss Blakeney for an interview with him, which she would arrange as they rambled.

"Take no refusal!" were her parting words as she stepped out upon the verandah.

Maud strolled leisurely towards the rendezvous indicated by Lady Beckton. He required all the time he could get to confirm his resolutions and recover his usual *maintien* of repose. With his mind made up at last, and a face in which few would have read the heart in fetters beneath, he jumped a wicker fence and, by a cross-path, brought the ladies in view. They were walking separately, but, as his footsteps were heard, Lady Beckton slipped her arm into Miss Brown's, and commenced, apparently, a very earnest undertone of conversation. Miss Blakeney turned. Her face glowed with exercise, and Maud confessed to himself that he rarely had seen so beautiful a woman.

"You are come in time, Mr. Maud," she said, "for something is going on between my companions from which I am excluded."

"*En revanche*, suppose we have our little exclusive secret!" said Maud, offering his arm.

Miss Blakeney coloured slightly, and consented to obey the slight resistance of his arm, by which they fell behind. A silence of a few moments followed, for if the proposed secret were a proposal of marriage it had been too bluntly approached. Maud felt that he must once more return to indifferent topics, and lead on the delicate subject at his lips with more tact and preparation.

They ascended a slight elevation in the walk which overlooked the wilder confines of the park. A slight smoke rose from a clump of trees, indicating an intrusion of gipsies within, and the next instant a deep-mouthed bark rang out before them, and the two ladies came rushing back in violent terror, assailed at every step of their flight by a powerful and infuriated mastiff. Maud ran forward immediately, and succeeded in driving the dog back to the tents; but on his return he found only the terrified Mabel, who, leaning against a tree, and partly recovered from her breathless flight, was quietly awaiting him.

"Here is a change of partners as my heart would have it!" thought Maud, as he drew her slight arm within his own. "The transfer looks to me like the interposition of my good angel, and I accept the warning!"

And, in words that needed no management to bring them skilfully on—with the eloquence of a heart released from fetters all but intolerable, and from a threatened slavery for life—Lindsay Maud poured out the fervent passion of his heart to Mabel Brown. The crust of a selfish and artificial life broke up in the tumult of that declaration, and he found himself once more natural and true to the instincts and better impulses of his character. He was met with the trembling response that such pure love looks for when it finds utterance, and, without a thought of worldly calculation or a shadow of a scheme for their means and manner of life, they exchanged promises to which the subsequent ceremony of marriage was but the formal seal.

And, at the announcement of this termination to her matrimonial schemes Lady Beckton seemed much more troubled than Miss Blakeney.

But Lady Beckton's disappointment was somewhat modified when she discovered that Miss Blakeney had, long before, secretly endowed her adopted sister Mabel with the half of her fortune.

THE REVENGE OF THE SIGNOR BASIL.

PART I.

"Un homme capable de faire des dominos avec les os de son père."

PERE GORIOT.

It was in the golden month of August, not very long ago, that the steamer which plies between St. Mark's Stairs, at Venice, and the river into which Phaeton turned a somerset with the horses of the sun, started on its course over the lagoon with an unusual God-send of passengers. The moon was rising from the unchaste bed of the Adriatic (wedded every year to Venice, yet every day and night sending the sun and moon from her lovely bosom to the sky), and while the gold of the west was still glowing on the landward side of the Campanile, a silver gleam was brightening momentarily on the other, and the Arabic domes of St. Mark, and the flying Mercury on the Dogana, paled to the setting orb and kindled to the rising sun, with the same Talleyrandesque facility.

For the first hour the Mangia-foco sputtered on her way with a silent company; the poetry of the scene, or the regrets at leaving the delicious city lessening in the distance, affecting all alike with a thoughtful incommunicativeness. Gradually, however, the dolphin hues over the Brenta faded away—the marble city sank into the sea, with its turrets and bright spires—the still lagoon became a sheet of polished glass—and the silent groups leaning over the rails found tongues and feet, and began to stir and murmur.

With the usual unconscious crystallization of society, the passengers of the Mangia-foco had yielded one side of the deck to a party of some rank, who had left their carriages at Ferrara, in coming from Florence to Venice, and were now upon their return to the city of Tasso, stomaching, with what grace they might, the contact of a vulgar conveyance which saved them the hundred miles of posting between Ferrara and the Brenta. In the centre of the aristocratic circle stood a lady enveloped in a cashmere, but with her bonnet hung by the string over her arm—one of those women of Italy upon whom the divinest gifts of loveliness are showered with a profusion which apparently impoverishes the sex of the whole nation. A beautiful woman in that land is rarely met; but

when she does appear, she is what Venus would have been, after the contest for beauty on Ida, had the weapons of her antagonists, as in the tournaments of chivalry, been added to the palm of victory. The Marchesa del Marmore was apparently twenty-three, and she might have been an incarnation of the morning star for pride and brightness.

On the other side of the deck stood a group of young men; who, by their careless and rather shabby dress, but pale and intellectual faces, were of that class met in every public conveyance of Italy. The portfolios under their arms, ready for a sketch, would have removed a doubt of their profession, had one existed; and, with that proud independence for which the class is remarkable, they had separated themselves equally from the noble and ignoble—disqualified by inward superiority from association with the one, and by accidental poverty from the claims cultivation might give them upon the other. Their glances at the divine face turned toward them from the party I have alluded to, were less constant than those of the vulgar, who could not offend; but they were evidently occupied more with it than with the fishing-boats lying asleep on the lagoon: and one of them, half-buried in the coil of a rope, and looking under the arm of another, had already made a sketch of her that might some day make the world wonder from what seventh heaven of fancy such an angelic vision of a head had descended upon the painter's dream.

In the rear of this group, with the air of one who could conceal himself from view, stood a young man who belonged to the party, but who, with less of the pallor of intellectual habits in his face, was much better dressed than his companions, and had, in spite of the portfolio under his arm, and a hat of the Savior breadth of brim, the undisguisable air of a person accustomed to the best society. While maintaining a straggling conversation with his friends, with whom he seemed a favourite, Signor Basil employed himself in looking over the sketch of the lovely Marchesa going on at his elbow—occasionally, as if to compare it with the original, stealing a long look, from between his hand and his slouched hat, at the radiant creature sitting so unconsciously for her picture, and in a low voice correcting, as by the result of his gaze, the rapid touches of the artist.

"Take a finer pencil for the nostril, caro mio!" said he; "it is as thin as the edge of a violet, and its transparent curve——"

"Cospetto!" said the youth; "but you see by this faint light better than I; if she would but turn to the moon——"

The Signor Basil suddenly flung his handkerchief into the lagoon, bringing its shadow between the Queen of Night and the Marchesa del Marmore; and, attracted from her reverie by the passing object, the lady moved her head quickly to the light, and in that moment the spirited lip and nostril were transferred to the painter's sketch.

"Thanks, mio bravo!" enthusiastically exclaimed the looker-on; "Giorgione would not have beaten thee with the crayon!" and, with a rudeness which surprised the artist, he seized the paper from beneath his hand, and walked away with it to the stern, and, leaning far over the rails, perused it fixedly by the mellow lustre of the moon. The youth presently followed him, and after a few words exchanged in an undertone, Signor Basil slipped a piece of gold into his hand, and carefully placed the sketch in his own portfolio.

II.

It was toward midnight when the Mangia-foco entered the Adige, and keeping its steady way between the low banks of the river, made for the grass-grown and flowery canal which connects its waters with the Po. Most of the passengers had yielded to the drowsy influence of the night air, and, of the aristocratic party on the larboard side, the young Marchesa alone was waking: her friends had made couches of their cloaks and baggage, and were reclining at her feet, while the artists, all except the Signor Basil, were stretched fairly on the deck, their portfolios beneath their heads, and the large hats covering their faces from the powerful rays of the moon.

"Miladi does justice to the beauty of the night," said the waking artist, in a low and respectful tone, as he rose from her feet with a cluster of tuberose she had let fall from her hand.

"It is indeed lovely, Signor pittore," responded the Marchesa, glancing at his portfolio, and receiving the flowers with a gracious inclination; "have you touched Venice from the lagoon to-night?"

The Signor Basil opened his portfolio, and replied to the indirect request of the lady by showing her a very indifferent sketch of Venice from the island of St. Lazzaro. As if to escape from the necessity of praising what had evidently disappointed her, she turned the cartoon hastily, and exposed, on

the sheet beneath, the spirited and admirable outline of her own matchless features.

A slight start alone betrayed the surprise of the high-born lady, and, raising the cartoon to examine it more closely, she said with a smile, "You may easier tread on Titian's heels than Canaletti's. Bezzuoli has painted me, and not so well. I will awake the Marquis, and he shall purchase it of you."

"Not for the wealth of the Medici, madam!" said the young man, clasping his portfolio hastily, "pray, do not disturb monsignore! The picture is dear to me!"

The Marchesa, looking into his face, with a glance around, which the accomplished courtier before her read better than she dreamed, drew her shawl over her blanched shoulders, and settled herself to listen to the conversation of her new acquaintance.

"You would be less gracious if you were observed, proud beauty," thought Basil; "but, while you think the poor painter may while away the tediousness of a vigil, he may feed his eyes on your beauty as well."

The Mangia-foco turned into the canal, threaded its lily-paved waters for a mile or two, and then, putting forth upon the broad bosom of the Po, went on her course against the stream, and, with retarded pace, penetrated toward the sun-beloved heart of Italy. And while the later hours performed their procession with the stars, the Marchesa del Marmore leaned sleepless and unfatigued against the railing, listening with mingled curiosity and scorn to the passionate love-murmur of the enamoured painter. His hat was thrown aside, his fair and curling locks were flowing in the night air, his form was bent earnestly but respectfully toward her, and on his lip, with all its submissive tenderness, there sat a shadow of something she could not define, but which rebuked, ever and anon, as with the fierce regard of a noble, the condescension she felt towards him as an artist.

III.

Upon the lofty dome of the altar in the cathedral of Bologna stands poised an angel in marble, not spoken of in the books of travellers, but perhaps the loveliest incarnation of a blessed cherub that ever lay in the veined bosom of Pentelicus. Lost and unobserved on the vast floor of the nave, the group of artists, who had made a day's journey from Ferrara, sat in the wicker chairs, hired for a baiocch during the vesper, and drew silently from this angel, while the devout people of Bologna

murmured their Ave Marias around. Signor Basil alone was content to look over the work of his companions, and the twilight had already begun to brighten the undying lamps at the shrine, when he started from the pillar against which he leaned, and crossed hastily towards a group issuing from a private chapel in the western aisle. A lady walked between two gentlemen of noble mien, and behind her, attended by an equally distinguished company, followed that lady's husband, the Marchese del Marmore. They were strangers passing through Bologna, and had been attended to vespers by some noble friends.

The companions of the Signor Basil looked on with some surprise as their enamoured friend stepped confidently before the two nobles in attendance upon the lady, and arrested her steps with a salutation which, though respectful as became a gentleman, was marked with the easy politeness of one accustomed to a favourable reception.

"May I congratulate miladi," he said, rising slowly from his bow, and fixing his eyes with unembarrassed admiration on her own liquid but now frowning orbs, "upon her safe journey over the Marches! Bologna," he continued, glancing at the nobles with a courteous smile, "welcomes her fittingly."

The lady listened with a look of surprise, and the Bolognese glanced from the dusty boots of the artist to his portfolio.

"Has the painter the honour to know la Signora?" asked the cavalier on her right.

"Signor, si!" said the painter fiercely, as a curl arched the lady's lip, and she prepared to answer.

The colour mounted to the temples of the Marchesa, and her husband, who had loitered beneath the Madonna of Domenichino, coming up at the instant, she bowed coldly to the Signor Basil, and continued down the aisle. The artist followed to her carriage, and lifted his hat respectfully as the lumbering equipage took its way by the famous statue of Neptune, and then, with a confident smile, which seemed to his companions somewhat mistimed, he muttered between his teeth, "*cisascuno son bel' giorno!*" and strolled loitering on with them to the trattoria.

IV.

The court of the Grand-Duke of Florence is perhaps the most cosmopolitan, and the most easy of access, in all Europe. The Austrian-born monarch himself, adopting in some degree the frank and joyous character of the people over whom he

reigns, throws open his parks and palaces, his gardens and galleries, to the strangers passing through; and, in the season of gaiety, almost any presentable person, resident at Florence, may procure the *entrée* to the court balls, and start fair with noble dames and gentlemen for grace in courtly favour. The *fêtes* at the Palazzo Pitti, albeit not always exempt from a leaven of vulgarity, are always brilliant and amusing, and the exclusives of the court, though they draw the line distinctly enough to their own eye, mix with apparent abandonment in the motley waltz and mazurka: and, either from good nature or a haughty conviction of their superiority, never suffer the offensive *cordon* to be felt, scarce to be suspected, by the multitude who divert them. The Grand-Duke, to common eyes, is a grave and rather timid person, with more of the appearance of the scholar than of the sovereign, courteous in public, and benevolent and earnest in his personal attentions to his guests at the palace. The royal quadrille may be shared without permission of the Grand Chamberlain, and the royal eye, after the first one or two dances of ceremony, searches for partners by the lamp of beauty, heedless of the diamonds on the brow, or the star of nobility on the shoulder. The grand supper is scarce more exclusive, and, on the disappearance of the royal *cortège*, the delighted crowd take their departure, having seen no class more favoured than themselves, and enchanted with the gracious absence of pretension in the *nobiltà* of Tuscany.

Built against the side of a steep hill, the Palazzo Pitti incloses its rooms of state within massive and sombre walls in front, while, in the rear, the higher stories of the palace open forth on a level with the delicious gardens of the Boboli, and contain suites of smaller apartments, fitted up with a cost and luxury which would beggar the dream of a Sybarite. Here lives the monarch, in a seclusion rendered deeper and more sacred by the propinquity of the admitted world in the apartments below; and, in this sanctuary of royalty is enclosed a tide of life, as silent and unsuspected by the common inhabitant of Florence as the flow of the ocean-veiled Arethusa by the mariner of the Ionian main. Here the invention of the fiery genius of Italy is exhausted in poetical luxury; here the reserved and silent sovereign throws off his *maintien* of royal condescension, and enters with equal arms into the lists of love and wit; here burn (as if upon an altar fed with spice-woods and precious gums) the fervent and uncalculating pas-

sions of this glowing clime, in senses refined by noble nurture, and hearts prompted by the haughty pulses of noble blood; and here—to the threshold of this sanctuary of royal pleasure—press all who know its secrets, and who imagine a claim to it in their birth and attractions, while the *lascia-passare* is accorded with a difficulty which alone preserves its splendour.

Some two or three days after the repulse of the Signor Basil in the cathedral of Bologna, the group of travelling artists were on their way from the grand gallery at Florence to their noon-day meal. Loitering with slow feet through the crowded and narrow Via Calzaiole, they emerged into the sunny Piazza, and, looking up with understanding eyes at the slender shaft of the Campanile (than which a fairer figure of religious architecture points not to heaven), they took their way toward the Church of Santa Trinita, proposing to eat their early dinner at a house named, from its excellence in a certain temperate beverage, *La Birra*. The traveller should be advised also, that by paying an extra paul in the bottle, he may have, at this renowned eating-house, an old wine sunned on the southern shoulder of Fiesolè, that hath in its flavour a certain redolence of Boccaccio—scarce remarkable, since it grew in the scene of the Decameron—but of a virtue which, to the Hundred Tales of Love (read drinking), is what the *Gradus ad Parnassum* should be to the building of a dithyrambic. The oil of two *crazie* upon the palm of the fat waiter Giuseppe will assist in calling the vintage to his memory.

A thundering rap upon the gate of the adjoining Palazzo arrested the attention of the artists as they were about to enter the Birra, and, in the occupant of a dark-green cabriolet, drawn by a pampered horse of the Duke's breed, they recognized, elegantly dressed, and *posed* on his seat *à la d'Orsay*, the Signor Basil. His coat was of an undecided cut and colour, and his gloves were of primrose purity.

The recognition was immediate, and the cordiality of the greeting mutual. They had parted from their companion at the gate of Florence, as travellers part, without question, and they met without reserve to part as questionless again. The artists were surprised at the Signor Basil's transformation, but no follower of their refined art would have been so ill-bred as to express it. He wished them the *bon appetito*, as a tall chasseur came out to say that her Ladyship was at home; and, with a slacked rein the fiery horse sprang through the

gateway, and the marble court of the palace rang with his prancing hoofs.

He who was idle and bought flowers at the Café of the Colonna, at Florence, will have remarked, as he sat in his chair upon the street in the sultry evening, the richly-ornamented terrace and balustrade of the Palazzo Corsi, giving upon the Piazza Trinita. The dark old Ghibelline palace of the Strozzi lets the eye down upon it, as it might pass from a helmeted knight with closed vizor to his unbonneted and laughing page. The crimson curtains of the window opening upon the terrace, at the time of our story, reminded every passing Florentine of the lady who dwelt within—a descendant of one of the haughtiest lines of English chivalry—resident in Italy since many years, for health, but bearing, in her delicate frame and exquisitely transparent features, the loftiest type of patrician beauty that had ever filled the eye that looked upon her. In the inner heaven of royal exclusiveness at the Pitti—in its constellation of rank and wit—the Lady Geraldine had long been the worshipped and ascendant cynosure. Happy in a husband without rank and but of moderate fortune, she maintained the spotless character of an English wife in this sphere of conventional corruption; and, though the idol of the Duke and his nobles, it would have been like a whisper against the purity of the brightest Pleiad, to have linked her name with love.

With her feet upon a sofa covered with a gossamer cashmere, her lovely head pillowed upon a cushion of silk, and a slight stand, within arm's length, holding a vase of flowers and the volume from which she had been reading, the Lady Geraldine received the Count Basil Spirifort, some time *attaché* to the Russian embassy at Paris (where he had first sunned his eyes in her beauty), and at present the newly-appointed secretary to the minister of the same monarch near the court of Tuscany.

Without a bow, but with the hasty step and gesture of a long absent and favoured friend, the Count Basil ran to the proffered hand, and pressed its alabaster fingers to his lips. Had the more common acquaintances of the diplomat seen him at this moment, they would have marvelled how the mask of manhood may drop, and disclose the ingenuous features of the boy. The secretary knew his species, and the Lady Geraldine was one of those women for whom the soul is unwilling to possess a secret.

After the first inquiries were over, the lady questioned her recovered favourite of his history since they had parted. "I left you," she said, "swimming the dangerous tide of life at Paris. How have you come to shore?"

"Thanks, perhaps, to your friendship, which made life worth the struggle! For the two extremes, however, you know what I was at Paris—and yesterday I was a wandering artist in velveteen and sombrero!"

Lady Geraldine laughed.

"Ah! you look at my curls—but Macassar is at a discount! It is the only grace I cherished in my incognito. A *résumer*—I got terribly out of love by the end of the year after we parted, and as terribly in debt. My promotion in diplomacy did *not* arrive, and the extreme hour for my credit *did*. Pozzo di Borgo kindly procured me *congé* for a couple of years, and I dived presently under a broad-brimmed hat, got into a vetturino with portfolio and pencils, joined a troop of wandering artists, and, with my patrimony at nurse, have been two years looking at life, without spectacles, at Venice."

"And painting?"

"Painting!"

"Might one see a specimen?" asked the Lady Geraldine, with an incredulous smile.

"I regret that my immortal efforts in oils are in the possession of a certain Venetian, who lets the fifth floor of a tenement washed by the narrowest canal in that fair city. But, if your Ladyship cares to see a drawing or two—"

He rang the bell, and his *jocki Anglais* presently brought, from the pocket of his cabriolet, a wayworn and thinly-furnished portfolio. The Lady Geraldine turned over a half-dozen indifferent views of Venice, but the last cartoon in the portfolio made her start.

"La Marchesa del Marmore!" she exclaimed, looking at Count Basil with an inquiring and half-uneasy eye.

"Is it well-drawn?" he asked quietly.

"Well drawn?—it is a sketch worthy of Raphael. Do you really draw so well as this, or?"—she added, after a slight hesitation—"is it a miracle of love?"

"It is a divine head," soliloquised the Russian, half closing his eyes, and looking at the drawing from a distance, as if to fill up the imperfect outline from his memory.

The Lady Geraldine laid her hand on his arm. "My dear Basil," she said seriously, "I should be wretched if I thought

your happiness was in the power of this woman. Do you love her?"

"The portrait was not drawn by me," he answered, "though I have a reason for wishing her to think so. It was done by a fellow-traveller of mine, whom I wish to make a sketch of yourself, and I have brought it here to interest you in him as an artist. *Mais revenons à nos moutons*; la Marchesa was also a fellow-traveller of mine, and without loving her too violently, I owe her a certain debt of courtesy contracted on the way, Will you assist me to pay it?"

Relieved of her fears, and not at all suspecting the good faith of the diplomatist in his acknowledgements of gratitude, the Lady Geraldine inquired simply how she could serve him.

"In the twenty-four hours since my arrival at Florence," he said, "I have put myself, as you will see, *au courant* of the minor politics of the Pitti. Thanks to my Parisian renown, the duke has enrolled me already under the back-stairs oligarchy, and to-morrow night I shall sup with you in the saloon of Hercules after the ball is over. La Marchesa, as you well know, has, with all her rank and beauty, never been able to set foot within those guarded penetralia—*soit* her malicious tongue, *soit* the interest, against her, of the men she has played upon her hook so freely. The road to her heart, if there be one, lies over that threshold, and I would take the toll. Do you understand me, most beautiful Lady Geraldine?"

The Count Basil imprinted another kiss upon the fingers of the fair Englishwoman, as she promised to put into his hand, the following night, the illuminated ticket which was to repay, as she thought, too generously, a debt of gratitude; and, plucking a flower from her vase for his bosom, he took his leave to return at twilight to dinner. Dismissing his cabriolet at the gate, he turned on foot toward the church of San Gaetano, and, with an expression of unusual elation in his step and countenance, entered the *trattoria*, where dined at that moment his companions of the pencil.

The green lamps, glittering by thousands amid the foliage of the Boboli, had attained their full brightness, and the long-lived Italian day had died over the distant mountains of Carrara, leaving its inheritance of light apparently to the stars, who, on their fields of deepening blue, sparkled, each one like the leader of an unseen host, in the depths of heaven, himself the foremost and the most radiant. The night was balmy and voluptuous. The music of the Ducal band swelled forth from

the perfumed apartments on the air. A single nightingale, far back in the wilderness of the garden, poured from his melodious heart a chant of the most passionate melancholy. The sentinel of the body-guard, stationed at the limit of the spray of the fountain, leaned on his halberd and felt his rude senses melt in the united spells of luxury and nature. The ministers of a monarch's pleasure had done their utmost to prepare a scene of royal delight, and night and summer had flung in their enchantments when ingenuity was exhausted.

The dark architectural mass of the Pitti, pouring a blaze of light scarce endurable from its deeply-sunk windows, looked like the side of an enchanted mountain laid open for the revels of sorcery. The aigrette and plume passed by; the tiara and the jewel upon the breast; the gaily-dressed courtiers and glittering dames; and, to that soldier at his dewy post, it seemed like the realized raving of the improvisatore when he is lost in some fable of Araby. Yet, within, walked malice and hate, and the light and perfume, that might have fed an angel's heart with love, but deepened in many a beating bosom the consuming fires of envy.

With the gold key of office on his cape, the Grand Chamberlain stood at the feet of the Dowager Grand Duchess, and, by a sign to the musicians, hidden in a latticed gallery behind the Corinthian capital of the hall, retarded or accelerated the soft measure of the waltz. On a raised seat in the rear of the chairs of state, sat the ladies of honour and the noble dames nearest allied to royal blood; one solitary and privileged intruder alone sharing the elevated place—the Lady Geraldine. Dressed in white, her hair wound about her head in the simplest form, yet developing its divine shape with the clear outline of statuary, her eyes lambent with purity and sweetness, heavily fringed with lashes a shade darker than the light auburn braided on her temples, and the tint of the summer's most glowing rose turned out from the threadlike parting of her lips, she was a vision of loveliness to take into the memory, as the poet enshrines in his soul the impossible shape of his ideal, and consumes youth and age searching in vain for its like. Fair Lady Geraldine! thou wilt read these passionate words from one whose worship of thy intoxicating loveliness has never before found utterance, but, if this truly-told tale should betray the hand that has dared to describe thy beauty, in thy next orisons to St. Mary of Pity, breathe from those bright lips, a prayer that he may forget thee!

By the side of the Lady Geraldine, but behind the chair of the Grand Duchess, who listened to his conversation with singular delight, stood a slight young man of uncommon personal beauty, a stranger apparently to every other person present. His brilliant uniform alone betrayed him to be in the Russian diplomacy; and the marked distinction shown him, both by the reigning Queen of the Court, and the more powerful and inaccessible queen of beauty, marked him as an object of keen and universal curiosity. By the time the fifth mazurka had concluded its pendulous refrain, the Grand Chamberlain had tolerably well circulated the name and rank of Count Basil Spirifort, the renowned wit and *elegant* of Paris, newly appointed to the court of his royal highness of Tuscany. Fair eyes wandered amid his sunny curls, and beating bosoms hushed their pulses as he passed.

Count Basil knew the weight of a first impression. Count Basil knew also the uses of contempt. Upon the first principle he kept his place between the Grand Duchess and Lady Geraldine, exerting his deeply studied art of pleasing, to draw upon himself their exclusive attention. Upon the second principle, he was perfectly unconscious of the presence of another human being; and neither the gliding step of the small-eared Princess S—— in the waltz; nor the stately advance of the last female of the Medici in the mazurka, distracted his large blue eyes a moment from their idleness. With one hand on the eagle-hilt of his sword, and his side leaned against the high cushion of red velvet honoured by the pressure of the Lady Geraldine, he gazed up into that beaming face, when not bending respectfully to the Duchess, and drank steadfastly from her beauty, as the lotus-cup drinks light from the sun.

The new secretary had calculated well. In the deep recess of the window looking toward San Miniato, stood a lady, nearly hidden from view by the muslin curtains just stirring with the vibration of the music, who gazed on the immediate circle of the Grand Duchess, with an interest that was not attempted to be disguised. On her first entrance into the hall, the Marchesa del Marmore had recognised in the new minion of favour her impassioned lover of the lagoon, her slighted acquaintance of the cathedral. When the first shock of surprise was over, she looked on the form which she had found beautiful even in the disguise of poverty, and, forgetting her insulting repulse when he would have claimed in public the smile she

had given him when unobserved, she recalled with delight every syllable he had murmured in her ear, and every look she had called forth in the light of a Venetian moon. The man who had burned, upon the altar of her vanity, the most intoxicating incense—who had broken through the iron rules of convention and ceremony, to throw his homage at her feet—who had portrayed so incomparably (she believed) with his love-inspired pencil, the features imprinted on his heart—this chance-won worshipper, this daring but gifted plebeian, as she had thought him, had suddenly shot into her sphere, and become a legitimate object of love; and, beautified by the splendour of dress, and distinguished by the preference and favour of those incomparably above her, he seemed tenfold, to her eyes, the perfection of adorable beauty. As she remembered his eloquent devotion to herself, and saw the interest taken in him by a woman she hated and had calumniated—a woman who she believed stood between her and all the light of existence—she anticipated the triumph of taking him from her side, of exhibiting him to the world as a falcon seduced from his first quarry; and, never doubting that so brilliant a favourite would control the talisman of the Paradise she had so long wished to enter, she panted for the moment when she should catch his eye and draw him from his lure, and already heard the Chamberlain's voice in her ear, commanding her presence, after the ball, in the saloon of Hercules.

The Marchesa had been well observed from the first, by the wily diplomat. A thorough adept in the art (so necessary to his profession) of seeing without appearing to see, he had scarce lost a shade of the varying expressions of her countenance; and while she fancied him perfectly unconscious of her presence, he read her tell-tale features as if they had given utterance to her thoughts. He saw, with secret triumph, the effect of his brilliant position upon her proud and vain heart; watched her while she made use of her throng of despised admirers to create a sensation near him and attract his notice; and, when the ball wore on, and he was still in unwearied and exclusive attendance upon the Lady Geraldine, he gazed after her with a momentary curl of triumph on his lip, as she took up her concealed position in the embayed window, and abandoned herself to the bitter occupation of watching the happiness of her rival. The Lady Geraldine had never been so animated since her first appearance at the Court of Tuscany.

It was past midnight when the Grand Duke, flushed and tired with dancing, came to the side of the Lady Geraldine. Count Basil gave place, and, remaining a moment in nominal obedience to the sovereign's polite request, which he was too politic to construe literally, he looked down the dance with the air of one who has turned his back on all that could interest him, and, passing close to the concealed position of the Marchesa, stepped out upon the balcony.

The air was cool, and the fountain played refreshingly below. The Count Basil was one of those minds which never have so much leisure for digression, as when they are most occupied. A love, as deep and profound as the abysses of his soul, was weaving thread for thread with a revenge worthy of a Mohican; yet, after trying in vain to count eight in the Pleiades, he raised himself upon the marble balustrade, and, perfectly anticipating the interruption to his solitude which presently occurred, began to speculate aloud on the dead and living at that hour beneath the roof of the Pitti.

"A painter's mistress," he said, "immortal in the touch of her paramour's pencil, is worshipped for centuries on these walls by the pilgrims of art; while the warm perfection of all loveliness—the purest and divinest of highborn women—will perish utterly with the eyes that have seen her! The Bella of Titian, the Fornarina of Raffaele—peasant-girls of Italy—have, at this moment, more value in this royal palace, than the breathing forms that inhabit it! The Lady Geraldine herself, to whom the sovereign offers at this moment his most flattering homage, would be less a loss to him than either! Yet they despise the gods of the pencil who may thus make them immortal! The dull blood in their noble veins, that never bred a thought beyond the instincts of their kind, would look down, forsooth, on the inventive and celestial ichor, that inflames the brain, and prompts the fiery hand of the painter! How long will this very sovereign live in the memories of men? The murderous Medici, the ambitious Cardinals, the abandoned women, of an age gone by, hang in imperishable colours on his walls; while of him, the lord of this land of genius, there is not a bust or a picture that would bring a sequin in the market-place! They would buy genius in these days like wine, and throw aside the flask in which it ripened. Raffaele and Buonarotti were companions for a Pope and his cardinals: Titian was an honoured guest for the Doge. The stimulus to immortalize these noble friends was

in the love they bore them; and the secret in their power to do it, lay half in the knowledge of their characters, gained by daily intimacy. Painters were princes then, as they are beggars now; and the princely art is beggared as well!"

The Marchesa del Marmore stepped out upon the balcony, leaning on the arm of the Grand Chamberlain. The soliloquizing secretary had foretold to himself both her coming and her companion.

"Monsieur le Comte," said the Chamberlain, "la Marchesa del Marmore wishes for the pleasure of your acquaintance."

Count Basil bowed low, and, in that low and musical tone of respectful devotion which, real or counterfeit, made him irresistible to a woman who had a soul to be thrilled, he repeated the usual nothings upon the beauty of the night; and when the Chamberlain returned to his duties, the Marchesa walked forth with her companion to the cool and fragrant alleys of the garden, and, under the silent and listening stars, implored forgiveness for her pride; and, with the sudden abandonment peculiar to the clime, poured into his ear the passionate and weeping avowal of her sorrow and love.

"Those hours of penitence in the embayed window," thought Count Basil, "were healthy for your soul." And, as she walked by his side, leaning heavily on his arm, and half-dissolved in a confiding tenderness, his thoughts reverted to another and a far sweeter voice; and, while the caressing words of the Marchesa fell on an unlistening ear, his footsteps insensibly turned back to the lighted hall.

VI.

As the daylight stole softly over Vallombrosa, the luxurious chariot of the Marchesa del Marmore stopped at the door of Count Basil. The Lady Geraldine's suit had been successful; and the hitherto excluded Florentine had received from the hand of the man she had once so ignorantly scorned, a privilege for which she would have bartered her salvation: she had supped at his side in the saloon of Hercules. With many faults of character, she was an Italian in feeling, and had a capacity, like all her countrywomen, for a consuming and headlong passion. She had better have been born of marble.

"I have lifted you to heaven," said Count Basil, as her chariot-wheels rolled from his door; "but it is as the eagle soars into the clouds with the serpent. We will see how you will relish the fall!"

PART II.

THE Grand-Duke's carriages, with their six horses and outriders, had turned down the Borg'ognisanti, and the "City of the Red Lily," waking from her noonday slumber, was alive with the sound of wheels. The sun was sinking over the Apennine which kneels at the gate of Florence; the streets were cool and shadowy; the old women, with the *bambina* between their knees, braided straw at the doors; the booted guardsman paced his black charger slowly over the jeweller's bridge; the picture-dealer brought forward his brightest "master" to the fading light; and while the famous churches of that fairest city of the earth called to the Ave-Maria with impatient bell, the gallantry and beauty of Tuscany sped through the dampening air with their swift horses, meeting and passing, with gay greetings, amid the green alleys of the Cascine.

The twilight had become grey, when the carriages and horsemen, scattered in hundreds through the interlaced roads of this loveliest of parks, turned by common consent towards the spacious square in the centre, and, drawing up, in thickly-serried ranks, the *soirée on wheels*, the *réunion en plein air*, which is one of the most delightful of the peculiar customs of Florence, commenced its healthful gaieties. The showy carriages of the Grand-Duke and the ex-King of Wurtemberg (whose rank would not permit them to share in the familiarities of the hour) disappeared by the avenue skirting the bank of the Arno, and, with much delicate and some desperate specimens of skill, the coachmen of the more exclusive nobility threaded the embarrassed press of vehicles, and laid their wheels together on the southern edge of the piazza. The beaux in the saddle, disembarrassed of ladies and axletrees, enjoyed their usual butterfly privilege of roving, and, with light rein and ready spur, pushed their impatient horses to the coronetted panels of the loveliest or most powerful; the laugh of the giddy was heard here and there over the pawing of restless hoofs; an occasional scream—half of apprehension, half of admiration—rewarded the daring caracole of some young and bold rider; and, while the first star sprang to its place, and the dew of heaven dropped into the false flowers in the hat of the belle, and into the thirsting lips of the violet in the field, (simplicity, like virtue, is *its own reward*!), the low murmur of calumny and compliments of love and light-

heartedness, of politeness, politics, puns, and poetry, arose over that assembly upon wheels: and, if it was not a scene and an hour of happiness, it was the fault neither of the fragrant eve nor of the provisions of nature and fortune. The material for happiness was there.

A showy *calèche*, with panels of dusky crimson, the hammer-cloth of the same shade, edged with a broad fringe of white, the wheels slightly picked out with the same colours, and the coachman and footmen in corresponding liveries, was drawn up near the southern edge of the Piazza. A narrow alley had been left for horsemen, between this equipage, and the adjoining ones, closed up at the extremity, however, by a dark green and very plain chariot, placed, with a bold violation of etiquette, directly across the line; and surrounded, just now, by two or three persons of the highest rank, leaning from their saddles in earnest conversation with the occupant. Not far from the *calèche*, mounted upon an English blood-horse of great beauty, a young man had just drawn rein as if interrupted only for a moment on some passing errand, and, with his hat slightly raised, was paying his compliments to the venerable Prince Poniatowski, at that time the Amphitryon of Florence. From moment to moment, as the pauses occurred in the exchange of courteous phrases, the rider, whose spurred heel was close at his saddle-girths, stole an impatient glance up the avenue of carriages to the dark green chariot, and, excited by the lifted rein and the proximity of the spur, the graceful horse fretted on his minion feet, and the bending figures from a hundred vehicles, and the focus of bright eyes radiating from all sides to the spot, would have betrayed, even to a stranger, that the horseman was of no common mark. Around his uncovered temples floated fair and well-cherished locks of the sunniest auburn; and if there was beauty in the finely-drawn lines of his lips, there was an inexpressibly fierce spirit as well.

II.

THE Count Basil had been a month at Florence. In that time he had contrived to place himself between the Duke's ear and all the avenues of favour, and had approached as near, perhaps nearer, to the hearts of the women of his court. A singular and instinctive knowledge of the weaknesses of human nature, perfected and concealed by converse with the consummate refinement of life at Paris, remarkable per-

sonal beauty, and a quality of scornful bitterness for which no one could divine a reason in a character and fate else so happily mingled, but which, at the same time, added to his fascination, had given Count Basil a command over the varied stops of society, equalled by few players on that difficult and capricious instrument. His worldly ambition went swimmingly on, and the same wind filled the sails of his lighter ventures as well. The love of the Marchesa del Marmore, as he had very well anticipated, grew with his influence and renown. A woman's pride, he perfectly knew, is difficult to wake after she has once believed herself adored; and, satisfied that the portrait taken on the lagoon, and the introduction he had given her to the exclusive penetralia of the Pitti, would hold her till his revenge was complete, he left her love for him to find its own food in his successes, and never approached her but to lay to her heart, more mordently, the serpents of jealousy and despair.

For the Lady Geraldine the Count Basil had conceived a love, the deepest of which his nature was capable. Long as he had known her, it was a passion born in Italy, and, while it partook of the qualities of the clime, it had for its basis the habitual and well-founded respect of a virtuous and sincere friendship. At their first acquaintance at Paris, the lovely Englishwoman, newly arrived from the purer moral atmosphere of her own country, was moving in the dissolute, but skilfully disguised society of the Faubourg St. Germain, with the simple unconsciousness of the pure in heart, innocent herself, and naturally unsuspicious of others. The perfect frankness with which she established an intimacy with the clever and accomplished *attaché*, had soon satisfied that clear-sighted person that there was no passion in her preference, and, giddy with the thousand pleasures of that metropolis of delight, he had readily sunk his first startled admiration of her beauty in an affectionate and confiding friendship. He had thus shown her the better qualities of his character only, and, charmed with his wit and penetration, and something flattered, perhaps, with the devotion of so acknowledged an autocrat of fashion and talent, she had formed an attachment for him that had all the earnestness of love without its passion. They met at Florence, but the "knowledge of good and evil" had, by this time, driven the Lady Geraldine from her Eden of unconsciousness. Still as irreproachable in conduct, and perhaps as pure in heart as before, an acquaint-

ance with the forms of vice had introduced into her manners those ostensible cautions which, while they protect, suggest also what is to be feared.

A change had taken place also in Count Basil. He had left the vitreous and mercurial clime of France, with its volatile and superficial occupations, for the voluptuous and indolent air of Italy, and the study of its impassioned deifications of beauty. That which had before been in him an instinct of gay pleasure—a pursuit which palled in the first moment of success, and was second to his ambition or his vanity—had become, in those two years of a painter's life, a thirst both of the senses and the imagination, which had usurped the very throne of his soul. Like the Hindoo youth, who finds the gilded plaything of his childhood elevated in his maturer years into a god, he bowed his heart to what he held so lightly, and brought the costly sacrifice of time and thought to its altars. He had fed his eyes upon the divine glories of the pencil, and upon the breathing wonders of love in marble, beneath the sky and in the dissolving air in which they rose to the hand of inspiration; and, with his eye disciplined, and his blood fused with taste and enthusiasm, that idolatry of beauty, which had before seemed sensual or unreal, kindled its first fires in his mind, and his senses were intoxicated with the incense. There is a kind of compromise in the effects of the atmosphere and arts of Italy. If the intellect takes a warmer hue in its study of the fair models of antiquity, the senses in turn become more refined and intellectual. In other latitudes and lands, woman is loved more coldly. After the brief reign of a passion of instinct, she is happy if she can retain her empire by habit, or the qualities of the heart. That divine form, meant to assimilate her to the angels, has never been recognised by the dull eye that should have seen in it a type of her soul. To the love of the painter or the statuary, or to his who has made himself conversant with their models, is added the imperishable enthusiasm of a captivating and exalted study. The mistress of his heart is the mistress of his mind. She is the breathing realization of that secret ideal which exists in every mind, but which, in men ignorant of the fine arts, takes another form, and becomes a woman's rival and usurper. She is like nothing in ambition—she is like nothing in science or business—nothing in out-of-door pleasures. If politics, or the chase, or the acquisition of wealth, is the form of this ruling passion, she is

unassociated with that which is nearest his heart, and he returns to her with an exhausted interest and a flagging fancy. It is her strongest tie upon his affection, even, that she is his refuge when unfit for that which occupies him most—in his fatigue, his disappointment, his vacuity of head and heart. He thinks of her only as she receives him in his most worthless hours; and, as his refreshed intellects awake, she is forgotten with the first thought of his favourite theme—for what has a woman's loveliness to do with that?

Count Basil had not concluded his first interview with the Lady Geraldine without marvelling at the new feelings with which he looked upon her. He had never before realised her singular and adorable beauty. The exquisitely turned head, the small and pearly ears, the spiritual nostril, the softly-moulded chin, the clear loftiness of expression yet inexpressible delicacy and brightness in the lips, and a throat and bust—than which those of Faustina in the delicious marble of the Gallery of Florence might be less envied by the Queen of Love—his gaze wandered over these and followed her in the harmony of her motions and the native and unapproachable grace of every attitude, and the pictures he had so passionately studied seemed to fade in his mind, and the statues he had half worshipped seemed to descend from their pedestals depreciated. The Lady Geraldine for the first time *felt* his eye. For the first time in their acquaintance she was offended with its regard. Her embarrassment was read by the quick diplomat, and at that moment sprang into being a passion which perhaps had died but for the conscious acknowledgment of her rebuke.

Up to the evening in the Cascine, with which the second chapter of this mainly true tale commences, but one of the two leading threads in the Count Basil's woof had woven well. "The jealous are the damned," and the daily and deadly agony of the Marchesa del Marmore was a dark ground from which his love to the Lady Geraldine rose to his own eye in heightened relief. His dearest joy forwarded with equal step his dearest revenge; and while he could watch the working of his slow torture in the fascinated heart of his victim he was content to suspend a blow to which that of death would be a mercy. "The law," said Count Basil, as he watched her quivering and imploring lip, "takes cognizance but of the murder of the *body*. It has no retribution for the keener dagger of the *soul*."

III.

The conversation between the Russian Secretary and the Prince Poniatowski ended at last in a graceful bow from the former to his horse's neck; and the quicker rattling of the small hoofs on the ground, as the fine creature felt the movement in the saddle and prepared to bound away, drew all eyes once more upon the handsomest and most idolized gallant of Florence. The narrow lane of carriages, commencing with the showy *calèche* of the Marchesa del Marmore, and closed up by the plain chariot of the Lady Geraldine, was still open; and, with a glance at the latter which sufficiently indicated his destination, Count Basil raised his spurred heel, and, with a smile of delight and the quickness of a barb in the desert, galloped toward the opening. In the same instant the Marchesa del Marmore gave a convulsive spring forward, and, in obedience to an imperative order, her coachman violently drew rein and laid the back and forward wheels of the *calèche* directly across his path. Met in full career by this sudden obstacle, the horse of the Russian reared high in air; but ere the screams of apprehension had arisen from the adjacent carriages the silken bridle was slacked, and with a low bow to the foiled and beautiful Marchesa as he shot past, he brushed the hammer-cloths of the two scarce separated carriages, and, at the same instant, stood at the chariot window of the Lady Geraldine, as calm and respectful as if he had never known danger or emotion.

A hundred eyes had seen the expression of his face as he leaped past the unhappy woman, and the drama, of which that look was the key, was understood in Florence. The Lady Geraldine alone, seated far back in her chariot, was unconscious of the risk run for the smile with which she greeted its hero, and unconscious, as well, of the poignant jealousy and open mortification she had innocently assisted to inflict, she stretched her fair and transparent hand from the carriage and stroked the glossy neck of his horse, and while the Marchesa del Marmore drove past with a look of inexpressible anguish and hate, and the dispersing nobles and dames took their way to the city gates, Count Basil leaned close to the ear of that loveliest of breathing creatures and forgot, as *she* forgot in listening to the bewildering music of his voice, that the stars had risen, or that the night was closing around them.

The Cascine had long been silent when the chariot of the

Lady Geraldine took its way to the town, and, with the reins loose upon his horse's neck, Count Basil followed at a slower pace, lost in the reverie of a tumultuous passion. The sparkling and unobstructed stars broke through the leafy roof of the avenue whose silence was disturbed by those fine and light-stepping hoofs, and the challenge of the Duke's forester going his rounds ere the gates closed, had its own deep-throated echo for its answer. The Arno rippled among the rushes on its banks, the occasional roll of wheels passing the paved arch of the Ponte Seraglio, came faintly down the river upon the moist wind, the pointed cypresses of the convent of Bello Sguardo laid their slender fingers against the lowest stars in the southern horizon, and, with his feet pressed carelessly far through his stirrups and his head dropped on his bosom, the softened diplomate turned instinctively to the left in the last diverging point of the green alleys, and his horse's ears were already pricked at the tread, before the gate, of the watchful and idle *doganieri*.

Close under the city walls on this side Florence the traveller will remember that the trees are more thickly serried, and the stone seats, for the comfort and pleasure of those who would step forth from the hot streets for an hour of fresh air and rest, are mossy with the depth of the perpetual shade. In the midst of this dark avenue the unguided animal beneath the careless and forgetful rider suddenly stood still, and the next moment starting aside, a female sprang high against his neck, and Count Basil, ere awake from his reverie, felt the glance of a dagger blade across his bosom.

With the slender wrist that had given the blow firmly arrested in his left hand, the Count Basil slowly dismounted, and, after a steadfast look by the dim light into the face of the lovely assassin, he pressed her fingers respectfully, and with well counterfeited emotion, to his lips.

"Twice since the Ave-Maria!" he said, in a tone of reproachful tenderness, "and against a life that is your own!"

He could see, even in that faint light, the stern compression of those haughty lips, and the flash of the darkest eyes of the Val d'Arno. But leading her gently to a seat, he sat beside her, and, with scarce ten brief minutes of low-toned and consummate eloquence, he once more deluded her soul!

"We meet to-morrow," she said, as, after a burst of irrepressible tears, she disengaged herself from his neck, and

looked toward the end of the avenue, where Count Basil had already heard the pawing of her impatient horses.

"To-morrow!" he answered; "but, *mia carissima!*" he continued, opening his breast to staunch the blood of his wound, "you owe me a concession after this rude evidence of your love."

She looked into his face as if answer was superfluous.

"Drive to my palazzo at noon, and remain with me till the Ave-Maria."

For but half a moment the impassioned Italian hesitated. Though the step he demanded of her was apparently without motive or reason—though it was one that sacrificed, to a whim, her station, her fortune, and her friends—she hesitated but to question her reason if the wretched price of this sacrifice would be paid—if the love, to which she fled from this world and heaven was her own. In other countries the *crime* of infidelity is punished: in Italy it is the *appearance* only that is criminal. In proportion as the sin is overlooked, the violation of the outward proprieties of life is severely visited; and, while a lover is stipulated for in the marriage contract, an open visit to that lover's house is an offence which brands the perpetrator with irremediable shame. The Marchesa del Marmore well knew, that, in going forth from the ancestral palace of her husband on a visit to Count Basil, she took leave of it for ever. The equipage that would bear her to him would never return for her; the protection, the fortune, the noble relations, the troops of friends, would all drop from her. In the pride of her youth and beauty—from the highest pinnacle of rank—from the shelter of fortune and esteem—she would descend, by a single step, to be a beggar for life and love from the mercy of the heart she fled to!

"I will come," she said, in a firm voice, looking close into his face, as if she would read in his dim features the prophetic answer of his soul.

The Count Basil strained her to his bosom, and, starting back as if with the pain of his wound, he pleaded the necessity of a surgeon, and bade her a hasty good-night. And, while she gained her own carriage in secrecy, he rode round to the other gate, which opens upon the Borg'ognisanti, and, dismounting at the Café Colonna, where the artists were at this hour usually assembled, he sought out his fellow-traveller, Giannino Speranzo, who had sketched the Marchesa upon the lagoon, and made an appointment with him for the morrow.

IV.

While the Count Basil's revenge sped thus merrily, the just Fates were preparing for him a retribution in his love. The mortification of the Marchesa del Marmore, at the Cascine, had been made the subject of conversation at the *prima sera* of the Lady Geraldine; and, other details of the same secret drama transpiring at the same time, the whole secret of Count Basil's feeling toward that unfortunate woman flashed clearly and fully upon her. His motives for pretending to have drawn the portrait of the lagoon—for procuring her an admission to the exclusive suppers of the Pitti—for a thousand things which had been unaccountable, or referred to more amiable causes—were at once unveiled. Even yet, with no suspicion of the extent of his revenge, the Lady Geraldine felt an indignant pity for the unconscious victim, and a surprised disapproval of the character unmasked to her eye. Upon further reflection, her brow flushed to remember that she herself had been the most effective tool of his revenge; and, as she recalled circumstance after circumstance in the last month's history, the attention and preference he had shown her, and which had gratified her, perhaps, more than she admitted to herself, seemed to her sensitive and resentful mind to have been only the cold instruments of jealousy. Incapable as she was of an unlawful passion, the unequalled fascinations of Count Basil had silently found their way to her heart, and, if her indignation was kindled by a sense of justice and womanly pity, it was fed and fanned unawares by mortified pride. She rang, and sent an order to the gate that she was to be denied for the future to Count Basil Spirifort.

The servant had appeared with his silver tray in his hand, and, before leaving her presence to communicate the order, he presented her with a letter. Well foreseeing the *éclaircissement* which must follow the public scene in the Cascine, the Count Basil had left the café for his own palazzo; and, in a letter, of which the following is the passage most important to our story, he revealed, to the lady he loved, a secret, which he hoped would anticipate the common rumour:—

* * * * * “But these passionate words will have offended your ear, dearest lady, and I must pass to a theme on which I shall be less eloquent. You will hear to-night, perhaps, that which, with all your imagination, will scarce prepare you for what you will hear to-morrow. The Marchesa del Marmore is the victim of a revenge which has only been

second in my heart to the love I have for the first time breathed to you. I can never hope that you will either understand, or forgive, the bitterness in which it springs; yet it is a demon to which I am delivered, soul and body, and no spirit but my own can know its power. When I have called it by its name, and told you of its exasperation, if you do not pardon, you will pity me.

"You know that I am a Russian, and you know the station my talents have won me; but you do not know that I was born a serf and a slave! If you could rend open my heart and see the pool of blackness and bitterness that lies in its bottom—fallen, drop by drop, from this accursed remembrance—there would be little need to explain to you how this woman has offended me. Had I been honourably born, like yourself, I feel that I could have been, like you, an angel of light; as it is, the contumely of a *look* has stirred me to a revenge which has in it, I do not need to be told, the darkest elements of murder.

"My early history is of no importance, yet I may tell you it was such as to expose to every wind this lacerated nerve. In a foreign land, and holding an official rank, it was seldom breathed upon. I wore, mostly, a gay heart at Paris. In my late exile at Venice, I had time to brood upon my dark remembrance, and it was revived and fed by the melancholy of my solitude. The obscurity in which I lived, and the occasional comparison between myself and some passing noble in the Piazza, served to remind me, could I have forgotten it. I never dreamed of love in this humble disguise, and so never felt the contempt that had most power to wound me. On receiving the letters of my new appointment, however, this cautious humility did not wait to be put off with my sombrero. I started for Florence, clad in the habiliments of poverty, but with the gay mood of a courtier beneath. The first burst of my newly-released feelings was admiration for a woman of singular beauty, who stood near me on one of the most love-awakening and delicious eves that I ever remember. My heart was overflowing, and she permitted me to breathe my passionate adoration in her ear. The Marchesa del Marmore, but for the scorn of the succeeding day, would, I think, have been the mistress of my soul. Strangely enough, I had seen *you* without loving you.

"I have told you, as a bagatelle that might amuse you, my rencontre with Del Marmore and his dame in the cathedral of

Bologna. The look she gave me, there, sealed her doom. It was witnessed by the companions of my poverty, and the concentrated resentment of years sprang up at the insult. Had it been a man, I must have struck him dead where he stood: she was a woman, and I swore the downfall of her pride." * * *

Thus briefly dismissing the chief topic of his letter, Count Basil returned to the pleading of his love. It was dwelt on more eloquently than his revenge; but as the Lady Geraldine scarce read it to the end, it need not retard the procession of events in our story. The fair Englishwoman sat down beneath the Etruscan lamp, whose soft light illumined a brow cleared, as if by a sweep from the wing of her good angel, of the troubled dream which had overhung it, and in brief and decided, but kind and warning words, replied to the letter of Count Basil.

V.

It was noon on the following day, and the Contadini from the hills were settling to their siesta on the steps of the churches, and against the columns of the Piazza del Gran' Duca. The artists alone, in the cool gallery, and in the tempered halls of the Pitti, shook off the drowsiness of the hour, and strained sight and thought upon the immortal canvas from which they drew; while the sculptor, in his brightening studio, weary of the mallet, yet excited by the bolder light, leaned on the rough block behind him, and with listless body, but wakeful and fervent eye, studied the last touches upon his marble.

Prancing hoofs, and the sharp quick roll peculiar to the wheels of carriages of pleasure, awakened the aristocratic sleepers of the Via del Servi: and with a lash and jerk of violence, the coachman of the Marchesa del Marmore, enraged at the loss of his noonday repose, brought up her showy *calèche* at the door of Count Basil Spirifort. The fair occupant of that luxurious vehicle was pale, but the brightness of joy and hope burned almost fiercely in her eye.

The doors flew open as the Marchesa descended, and following a servant in the Count's livery, of whom she asked no question, she found herself in a small saloon, furnished with the peculiar luxury which marks the apartment of a bachelor; and darkened like a painter's room. The light came in from a single tall window, curtained below, and under it stood an easel, at which, on her first entrance, a young man stood sketching the outline of a female head. As she advanced,

looking eagerly around for another face, the artist lay down his palette, and with a low reverence presented her with a note from Count Basil. It informed her that political news of the highest importance had called him suddenly to the cabinet of his *chef*, but that he hoped to be with her soon; and meantime he begged of her, as a first favour in his newly-prospered love, to bless him with the possession of her portrait, done by the incomparable artist who would receive her.

Disappointment and vexation overwhelmed the heart of the Marchesa, and she burst into tears. She read the letter again, and grew calmer; for it was laden with epithets of endearment, and seemed to her written in the most sudden haste. Never doubting for an instant the truth of his apology, she removed her hat, and with a look at the deeply-shaded mirror, while she shook out from their confinement the masses of her luxuriant hair, she approached the painter's easel, and with a forced cheerfulness inquired in what attitude she should sit to him.

"If the Signora will amuse herself," he replied, with a bow, "it will be easy to compose the picture, and seize the expression without annoying her with a *pose*."

Relieved thus of any imperative occupation, the unhappy Marchesa seated herself by a table of intaglios and prints; and while she apparently occupied herself in the examination of these specimens of art, she was delivered, as her tormentor had well anticipated, to the alternate tortures of impatience and remorse. And while the hours wore on, and her face paled, and her eyes grew bloodshot with doubt and fear, the skilful painter, forgetting everything in the enthusiasm of his art, and forgotten utterly by his unconscious subject, transferred too faithfully to the canvas that picture of agonised expectation.

The afternoon, meantime, had worn away, and the gay world of Florence, from the side toward Fiesolè, rolled past the Via del Servi on their circuitous way to the Cascine, and saw, with dumb astonishment, the carriage and liveries of the Marchesa del Marmore at the door of Count Basil Spirifort. On they swept by the Via Mercata Nova to the Lung' Arno, and there their astonishment redoubled: for, in the window of the Casino dei Nobili, playing with a billiard cue, and laughing with a group of lounging exquisites, stood Count Basil himself, the most unoccupied and listless of sunset idlers. There was but one deduction to be drawn from this sequence

of events, and, when they remembered the demonstration of passionate jealousy on the previous evening in the Cascine, Count Basil, evidently innocent of participation in her passion, was deemed a persecuted man, and the Marchesa del Mar-more was lost to herself and the world!

Three days after this well-remembered circumstance in the history of Florence, an order was received from the Grand-Duke to admit into the exhibition of modern artists a picture by a young Venetian painter, an *élève* of Count Basil Spirifort. It was called "The Lady expecting an Inconstant," and had been pronounced by a virtuoso, who had seen it on private view, to be a masterpiece of expression and colour. It was instantly and indignantly recognised as the portrait of the unfortunate Marchesa, whose late abandonment of her husband was fresh on the lips of common rumour; but, ere it could be officially removed, the circumstance had been noised abroad, and the picture had been seen by all the curious in Florence. The order for its removal was given; but the purpose of Count Basil had been effected, and the name of the unhappy Marchesa had become a jest on the vulgar tongue.

This tale had not been told, had there not been more than a common justice in its sequel. The worse passions of men, in common life, are sometimes inscrutably prospered. The revenge of Count Basil, however, was betrayed by the last act which completed it; and, while the victim of his fiendish resentment finds a peaceful asylum in England under the roof of the compassionate Lady Geraldine, the once gay and admired Russian wanders from city to city, followed by an evil reputation, and stamped unaccountably as a *jattatore*.*

LOVE AND DIPLOMACY.

"Pray pardon me,
For I am like a boy that hath found money—
Afraid I dream still." FORD OR WEBSTER.

It was on a fine September evening, within *my* time (and I am not, I trust, too old to be loved), that Count Anatole L—, of the impertinent and particularly useless profession of *attaché*, walked up and down before the glass in his rooms at the "Archduke Charles," the first hotel, as you know, if

* A man with an evil eye.

you have travelled, in the green-belted and fair city of Vienna. The brass ring was still swinging on the end of the bell-rope, and, in a respectful attitude at the door, stood the just summoned Signor Attilio, valet and privy councillor to one of the handsomest coxcombs errant through the world. Signor Attilio was a Tyrolese, and, like his master, was *very* handsome.

Count Anatole had been idling away three golden summer months in the Tyrol, for the sole purpose, as far as mortal eyes could see, of disguising his fine Phidian features in a callow mustache and whiskers. The *crines ridentes* (as Eneas Sylvius has it) being now in a condition beyond improvement, Signor Attilio had, for some days, been rather curious to know what course of events would next occupy the diplomatic talents of his master.

After a turn or two more, taken in silence, Count Anatole stopped in the middle of the floor, and, eyeing the well-made Tyrolese from head to foot, begged to know if he wore at the present moment, his most becoming breeches, jacket, and beaver.

Attilio was never astonished at anything his master did or said. He simply answered, "*Sì, signore.*"

"Be so kind as to strip immediately, and dress yourself in that travelling suit lying on the sofa."

As the green, gold-corded jacket, knee-breeches, buckles, and stockings were laid aside, Count Anatole threw off his dressing-gown, and commenced encasing his handsome proportions in the cast-off habiliments. He then put on the conical, slouch-rimmed hat, with the tall eagle's feather stuck jauntily on the side, and the two rich tassels pendant over his left eye; and, the toilet of the valet being completed at the same moment, they stood looking at one another with perfect gravity—rather transformed, but each apparently quite at home in his new character.

"You look very like a gentleman, Attilio," said the Count.

"Your Excellency has caught to admiration, *l'aria del paese*," complimented back again the sometime Tyrolese.

"Attilio!"

"Signore!"

"Do you remember the lady in the forest of Friuli?"

Attilio began to have a glimmering of things. Some three months before, the Count was dashing on at a rapid post-pace through a deep wood in the mountains which head in the Adriatic. A sudden pull-up at a turning in the road nearly

threw him from his britsçka; and, looking out at the "*anima di porco!*" of the postilion, he found his way impeded by an overset carriage, from which three or four servants were endeavouring to extract the body of an old man, killed by the accident.

There was more attractive metal for the traveller, however, in the shape of a young and beautiful woman, leaning pale and faint against a tree, and apparently about to sink to the ground, unassisted. To bring a hat full of water from the nearest brook, and receive her falling head on his shoulder, was the work of a thought. She had fainted away, and taking her, like a child, into his arms, he placed her on a bank by the road-side, bathed her forehead and lips, and chafed her small white hands, till his heart, with all the distress of the scene, was quite mad with her perfect beauty.

Animation, at last began to return, and as the flush was stealing into her lips, another carriage drove up with servants in the same livery, and Count Anatole, thoroughly bewildered in his new dream, mechanically assisted them in getting their living mistress and dead master into it; and until they were fairly out of sight, it had never occurred to him, that he might possibly wish to know the name and condition of the fairest piece of work he had ever seen from the hands of his Maker.

An hour before, he had doubled his *bono mano* to the postilion, and was driving on to Vienna as if to sit at a new Congress. Now, he stood leaning against the tree, at the foot of which the grass and wild flowers showed the print of a new made pressure, and the postilion cracked his whip, and Attilio reminded him of the hour he was losing, in vain.

He remounted after a while; but the order was to go back to the last post-house.

Three or four months at a solitary albergo in the neighbourhood of this adventure, passed by the Count in scouring the country on horseback in every direction, and by his servant in very particular ennui, brings up the story nearly to where the scene opens.

"I have seen her!" said the Count.

Attilio only lifted up his eyebrows.

"She is here, in Vienna!"

"*Felice lei!*" murmured Attilio.

"She is the Princess Leichstenfels, and, by the death of that old man, a widow."

"*Veramente!*" responded the valet, with a rising inflexion, for he knew his master and French morals too well, not to foresee a damper in the possibility of matrimony.

"*Veramente!*" gravely echoed the Count. "And now listen. The princess lives in close retirement. An old friend or two, and a tried servant, are the only persons who see her. You are to contrive to see this servant to-morrow, corrupt him to leave her, and recommend me in his place, and then you are to take him as your courier to Paris; whence, if I calculate well, you will return to me before long, with important despatches. Do you understand me?"

"*Signor, si!*"

In the small boudoir of a *maison de plaisance*, belonging to the noble family of Leichstenfels, sat the widowed mistress of one of the oldest titles and finest estates of Austria. The light from a single long window, opening down to the floor, and leading out upon a terrace of flowers, was subdued by a heavy, crimson curtain, looped partially away; a pastille lamp was sending up from its porphyry pedestal a thin, and just perceptible curl of smoke, through which the lady musingly passed backward and forward one of her slender fingers; and, on a table near, lay a sheet of black-edged paper, crossed by a small, silver pen, and scrawled over irregularly with devices and disconnected words, the work evidently of a fit of the most absolute and listless idleness.

The door opened, and a servant in mourning livery stood before the lady.

"I have thought over your request, Wilhelm," she said. "I had become accustomed to your services, and regret to lose you; but I should regret more to stand in the way of your interest. You have my permission."

Wilhelm expressed his thanks with an effort that showed he had not obeyed the call of mammon without regret, and requested leave to introduce the person he had proposed as his successor.

"Of what country is he?"

"Tyrolese, your Excellency."

"And why does he leave the gentleman with whom he came to Vienna?"

"*Il est amoureux d'une Viennoise, Madame,*" answered the ex-valet, resorting to French to express what he considered a delicate circumstance.

"*Pauvre enfant!*" said the Princess, with a sigh that partook as much of envy as of pity; "let him come in!"

And the Count Anatole, as the sweet accents reached his ear, stepped over the threshold, and in the coarse, but gay dress of the Tyrol, stood in the presence of her, whose dewy temples he had bathed in the forest, whose lips he had almost "pryed into for breath," whose snowy hands he had chafed and kissed when the senses had deserted their celestial organs—the angel of his perpetual dream, the lady of his wild and uncontrollable, but respectful and honourable love.

The Princess looked carelessly up as he approached, but her eyes seemed arrested in passing over his features. It was but momentary. She resumed her occupation of winding her taper fingers in the smoke-curls of the incense-lamp, and, with half a sigh, as if she had repelled a pleasing thought, she leaned back in the silken fauteuil, and asked the new-comer his name.

"Anatole, your Excellency."

The voice again seemed to stir something in her memory. She passed her hand over her eyes, and was for a moment lost in thought.

"Anatole," she said (oh, how the sound of his own name, murmured in that voice of music, thrilled through the fiery veins of the disguised lover!) "Anatole, I receive you into my service. Wilhelm will inform you of your duties, and—I have a fancy for the dress of the Tyrol—you may wear it instead of my livery, if you will."

And, with one stolen and warm gaze from under his drooping eyelids, and heart and lips on fire, as he thanked her for her condescension, the new retainer took his leave.

Month after month passed on—to Count Anatole in a bewildering dream of ever-deepening passion. It was upon a soft and amorous morning of April, that a dashing equipage stood at the door of the proud palace of Leichensteinfels. The arms of E— blazed on the panels, and the *insoucians* chasseurs leaned against the marble columns of the portico, waiting for their master, and speculating on the gaiety likely to ensue from the suit he was prosecuting within. How could a prince of E— be supposed to sue in vain?

The disguised footman had ushered the gay and handsome nobleman to his mistress's presence. After re-arranging a family of very well-arranged flower pots, shutting the window to open it again, changing the folds of the curtain not at all for the better, and looking a stolen and fierce look at the unconscious visitor, he could find no longer an apology for re-

maining in the room. He shut the door after him in a tempest of jealousy.

"Did your Excellency ring?" said he, opening the door again after a few minutes of intolerable torture.

The Prince was on his knees at her feet!

"No, Anatole; but you may bring me a glass of water."

As he entered, with a silver tray trembling in his hand, the Prince was rising to go. His face expressed delight, hope, triumph—everything that could madden the soul of the irritated lover. After waiting on his rival to his carriage, he returned to his mistress, and, receiving the glass upon the tray, was about to leave the room in silence, when the Princess called to him.

In all this lapse of time, it is not to be supposed that Count Anatole played merely his footman's part. His respectful and elegant demeanor, the propriety of his language, and that deep devotedness of manner which wins a woman more than all things else, soon gained upon the confidence of the Princess; and before a week was passed, she found that she was happier when he stood behind her chair, and gave him, with some self-denial, those frequent permissions of absence from the palace, which she supposed he asked to prosecute the amour disclosed to her on his introduction to her service. As time flew on, she attributed his earnestness, and occasional warmth of manner, to gratitude; and, without reasoning much on her feelings, gave herself up to the indulgence of a degree of interest in him, which would have alarmed a woman more skilled in the knowledge of the heart. Married from a convent, however, to an old man, who had secluded her from the world, the voice of the passionate Count in the forest of Friuli, was the first sound of love that had ever entered her ears. She knew not why it was, that the tones of her new footman, and now and then a look of his eyes, as he leaned over to assist her at table, troubled her memory like a trace of a long-lost dream.

But, oh, what moments had been *his*, in these fleeting months! Admitted to her presence in her most unguarded hours—seeing her at morning, at noon, at night, in all her unstudied, and surpassing loveliness—for ever near her, and with the world shut out—her rich hair blowing, with the lightest breeze, across his fingers in his assiduous service—her dark, full eyes, unconscious of an observer, filling with un-repressed tears, or glowing with pleasure over some tale of love—her exquisite form flung upon a couch, or beading over

flowers, or moving about the room in all its native and untrammelled grace—and her voice, tender, most tender, to him, though she knew it not, and her eyes, herself unaware, ever following him in his loitering attendance—and he, the while, losing never a glance nor a motion, but treasuring all up in his heart with the avarice of a miser—what, in common life, though it were the life of fortune's most favoured child, could compare with it for bliss?

Pale and agitated, the Count turned back at the call of his mistress, and stood waiting her pleasure.

"Anatole!"

"Madame!"

The answer was so low, and deep, it startled even himself.

She motioned him to come nearer. She had sunk upon the sofa, and, as he stood at her feet, she leaned forward, buried her hands and arms in the long curls which, in her retirement, she allowed to float luxuriantly over her shoulders, and sobbed aloud. Overcome and forgetful of all but the distress of the lovely creature before him, the Count dropped upon the cushion on which rested the small foot in its mourning slipper, and, taking her hand, pressed it suddenly and fervently to his lips.

The reality broke upon her! She was beloved—but by whom? A menial! and the appalling answer drove all the blood of her proud race in a torrent upon her heart, sweeping away all affection, as if her nature had never known its name. She sprang to her feet, and laid her hand upon the bell.

"Madame!" said Anatole, in a cold, proud tone.

She staid her arm to listen.

"I leave you for ever."

And again, with the quick revulsion of youth and passion, her woman's heart rose within her, and she buried her face in her hands, and dropped her head in utter abandonment on her bosom.

It was the birthday of the Emperor, and the courtly nobles of Austria were rolling out from the capital to offer their congratulations at the royal Palace of Schoenbrunn. In addition to the usual attractions of the scene, the drawing-room was to be graced by the first public appearance of a new Ambassador, whose reputed personal beauty, and the talents he had displayed in a late secret negociation, had set the whole Court, from the Queen of Hungary to the youngest *dame d'honneur*, in a flame of curiosity.

To the Prince E—— there was another reason for writing the day in red letters. The Princess Leichstenfels, by an express message from the Empress, was to throw aside her widow's weeds, and appear once more to the admiring world. She had yielded to the summons, but it was to be her last day of splendour. Her heart and hand were plighted to her Tyrolese minion; and the brightest and loveliest ornament of the Court of Austria, when the ceremonies of the day were over, was to lay aside the costly bauble from her shoulder, and the glittering tiara from her brow, and forget rank and fortune as the wife of his bosom!

The dazzling hours flew on. The plain and kind old Emperor welcomed and smiled upon all. The wily Metternich, in the prime of his successful manhood, cool, polite, handsome, and winning, gathered golden opinions by every word and look; the young Duke of Reichstadt, the mild and gentle son of the struck eagle of St. Helena, surrounded and caressed by a continual *cordon* of admiring women, seemed forgetful that Opportunity and Expectation awaited him, like two angels with their wings outspread; and haughty nobles and their haughtier dames, statesmen, scholars, soldiers, and priests, crowded upon each other's heels and mixed together in that doubtful *podrida*, which goes by the name of *pleasure*. I could moralize here, had I time!

The Princess of Leichstenfels had gone through the ceremony of presentation, and had heard the murmur of admiration, drawn by her beauty, from all lips. Dizzy with the scene, and with a bosom full of painful and conflicting emotions, she had accepted the proffered arm of Prince E—— to breathe a fresher air upon the terrace. They stood near a window, and he was pointing out to his fair, but inattentive companion, the various characters as they passed within.

"I must contrive," said the Prince, "to shew you the new Envoy. Oh! you have not heard of him. Beautiful as Narcissus, modest as Pastor Corydon, clever as the Prime Minister himself, this paragon of diplomatists has been here in disguise these three months—negotiating about Metternich and the devil knows what—but rewarded at last with an Ambassador's star, and—but here he is; Princess Leichstenfels, permit me to present——"

She heard no more. A glance from the diamond star on his breast, to the Hephæstion mouth, and keen, dark eye of Count Anatole, revealed to her the mystery of months. And,

as she leaned against the window for support, the hand that sustained her in the forest of Friuli, and the same thrilling voice, in almost the same never-forgotten cadence, offered his impassioned sympathy and aid; and she recognized and remembered all.

I must go back so far as to inform you, that Count Anatole, on the morning of this memorable day, had sacrificed a silky, but prurient moustache, and a pair of the very sauciest dark whiskers out of Coventry. Whether the Prince E—— recognized, in the new Envoy, the lady's gentleman who so inopportunately broke in upon his tender avowal, I am not prepared to say. I only know, (for I was there) that the Princess Leichstenfels was wedded to the new Ambassador in the "leafy month of June;" and the Prince E——, unfortunately prevented by illness from attending the nuptials, lost a very handsome opportunity of singing with effect—

"If she be not fair for me"—

supposing it translated into German.

Whether the enamoured Ambassadors prefers her husband in his new character, I am equally uncertain; though, from much knowledge of German Courts, and a little of human nature, I think she will be happy, if, at some future day, she would not willingly exchange her proud Envoy for the devoted Tyrolese, and does not sigh that she can no more bring him to her feet with a pull of a silken string.

THE MAD-HOUSE OF PALERMO.

HE who has not skimmed over the silvery waters of the Lipari, with a summer breeze right from Italy in his topsails, the smoke of Stromboli alone staining the unfathomable-looking blue of the sky, and, as the sun dipped his flaming disc in the sea, put up his helm for the bosom of *La Concha d'Oro*; the Golden Shell, as they beautifully call the bay of Palermo; he who has not thus entered, I say, to the fairest spot on the face of this very fair earth, has a leaf worth the turning, in his book of observation.

In ten minutes after dropping the anchor, with sky and water still in a glow, the men were all out of the rigging, the spars of the tall frigate were like lines pencilled on the sky, the band played inspiringly on the deck, and every boat along the gay Marina was freighted with fair Palermitans on its way to the stranger ship.

I was standing with the officer of the deck, by the capstan, looking at the first star, which had just sprung into its place, like a thing created with a glance of the eye.

"Shall we let the ladies aboard, sir?" said a smiling middy, coming aft from the gangway.

"Yes, sir. And tell the boatswain's mate to clear away for a dance on the quarter-deck."

In most of the ports of the Mediterranean, a ship-of-war on a summer cruise, is as welcome as the breeze from the sea. Bringing with her forty or fifty gay young officers overcharged with life and spirits, a band of music never so well occupied as when playing for a dance, and a deck whiter and smoother than a ball-room floor, the warlike vessel seems made for a scene of pleasure. Whatever her nation, she no sooner drops her anchor, than she is surrounded by boats from the shore; and when the word is passed for admission, her gangway is crowded with the mirth-loving and warm people of these southern climes, as much at home on board, and as ready to enter into any scheme of amusement, as the maddest-brained midshipman could desire.

The companion-hatch was covered with its grating, lest some dizzy waltzer should drop his partner into the steerage, the band got out their music-stand, and the bright buttons were soon whirling round from larboard to starboard, with forms in their clasp, and dark eyes glowing over their shoulders, that might have tempted the devil out of Stromboli.

Being only a passenger myself, I was contented with sitting on the side of a carronade, and with the music in my ear, and the twilight flush deepening in the fine-traced angles of the rigging, abandoning myself to the delicious listlessness with which the very air is pregnant in these climates of Paradise.

The light feet slid by, and the waltz, the gallopade, and the mazurka, had followed each other till it was broad moonlight on the decks. It was like a night without an atmosphere, the radiant flood poured down with such an invisible and moonlike clearness.

"Do you see the lady leaning on that old gentleman's arm by the hammock-rail?" said the first lieutenant, who sat upon the next gun—like myself a spectator of the scene.

I had remarked her well. She had been in the ship five or ten minutes, and, in that time, it seemed to me, I had drunk her beauty, even to intoxication. The frigate was slowly swinging round to the land breeze, and the moon, from

drawing the curved line of a gipsy-shaped *capella di paglia* with full bewitching concealment across her features, gradually fell upon the dark limit of her orb'd forehead. Heaven! what a vision of beauty! Solemn, and full of subdued pain as the countenance seemed, it was radiant with an almost supernatural light of mind. Thought and feeling seemed steeped into every line. Her mouth was large—the only departure from the severest model of the Greek—and stamped with calmness, as if it had been a legible word upon her lips. But her eyes—what can I say of their unnatural lightning—of the depth, the fulness, the wild and maniac-like passionateness of their every look?

My curiosity was strongly moved. I walked aft to the capstan, and, throwing off my habitual reserve with some effort, approached the old gentleman on whose arm she leaned, and begged permission to lead her out for a waltz.

"If you wish it, *carissima mia!*" said he, turning to her with all the tenderness in his tone of which the honeyed language of Italy is capable.

But she clung to his arm with startled closeness, and without even looking at me, turned her lips up to his ear, and murmured, "*Mai piu!*"

At my request, the officer on duty paid them the compliment of sending them ashore, in one of the frigate's boats; and, after assisting them down the ladder, I stood upon the broad stair on the level of the water, and watched the phosphoric wake of the swift cutter, till the bright sparkles were lost amid the vessels nearer land. The coxswain reported the boat's return; but all that belonged to the ship had not come back in her. My heart was left behind.

The next morning, there was the usual bustle in the gun-room preparatory to going ashore. Glittering uniforms lay about upon the chairs and tables, sprinkled with swords, epaulettes, and cocked hats; very well-brushed boots were sent to be re-brushed, and very nice coats to be made, if possible, to look nicer; the ship's barber was cursed for not having the hands of Briareus, and no good was wished to the eyes of the washerwoman of the last port where the frigate had anchored. Cologne-water was in great request, and the purser had an uncommon number of "private interviews."

Amid all the bustle, the question of how to pass the day was busily agitated. Twenty plans were proposed; but the sequel—a dinner at the *Hôtel Anglais*, and a "stroll for a

lark" after it—was the only point on which the speakers were quite unanimous.

One proposition was to go to Bagaria, and see the palace of Monsters. This is a villa about ten miles from Palermo, which the owner, Count Pallagonia, an eccentric Sicilian noble, has ornamented with some hundreds of statues of the finest workmanship, representing the form of woman, in every possible combination with beasts, fishes, and birds. It looks like the temptation of St. Anthony, on a splendid scale, and is certainly one of the most extraordinary spectacles in the world.

Near it stands another villa, the property of Prince Butera (the present minister of Naples at the court of France), containing in the depth of its pleasure-grounds, a large monastery, with wax monks, of the size and appearance of life, scattered about the passages and cells, and engaged in every possible unclerical avocation. It is a whimsical satire on the Order, done to the life.

Another plan was to go to the Capuchin convent, and see the dried friars—six or eight hundred bearded old men, *baked*, as they died, in their cowls and beards, and standing against the walls in ghastly rows, in the spacious vaults of the monastery. A more infernal spectacle never was seen by mortal eyes.

A drive to Monreale, a nest of a village on the mountain above the town—a visit to the gardens of a nobleman who salutes the stranger with a *jet d'eau* at every turning—and a lounge in the public promenade of Palermo itself—shared the honours of the argument.

I had been in Sicily before, and was hesitating which of these various 'lions' was worthy of a second visit, when the surgeon proposed to me to accompany him on a visit to a Sicilian Count, living in the neighbourhood, who had converted his château into a lunatic asylum, and devoted his time and a large fortune entirely to this singular hobby. He was the first to try the system, (now, thank God, generally approved!) of winning back reason to the most wretched of human sufferers by kindness and gentle treatment.

We jumped into one of the rattling *calesini* standing in the handsome corso of Palermo, and fifteen minutes beyond the gates brought us to the *Casa dei Pazzi*. My friend's uniform and profession were an immediate passport, and we were introduced into a handsome court, surrounded by a colonnade, and cooled by a fountain, in which were walking several well-

dressed people, with books, drawing-boards, battledores, and other means of amusement. They all bowed politely as we passed, and, at the door of the interior, we were met by the Count.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, "she was insane, then!"

It was the old man who was on board the night before!

"*E ella?*" said I, seizing his arm before he had concluded his bow, quite sure that he must understand me with a word.

"*Era pazza.*" He looked at me as he answered, with a scrutiny, as if he half suspected my friend had brought him a subject.

The singular character of her beauty was quite explained. Yet what a wreck!

I followed the old Count around his establishment in a kind of dream, but I could not avoid being interested at every step. Here were no chains, no whips, no harsh keepers, no cells of stone and straw. The walls of the long corridors were painted in fresco, representing sunny landscapes, and gay, dancing figures. Fountains and shrubs met us at every turn. The people were dressed in their ordinary clothes, and all employed in some light work or amusement. It was like what it might have been in the days of the Count's ancestors—a gay château, filled with guests and dependants, with no more apparent constraint than the ties of hospitality and service.

We went first to the kitchen. Here were ten people, all, but the cook, stark mad! It was one of the peculiarities of the Count's system, that his patients led in his house the lives to which they had previously been accustomed. A stout Sicilian peasant girl was employed in filling a large brasier from the basin of a fountain. While we were watching her task, the fit began to come on her, and, after a fierce look or two around the room, she commenced dashing the water about her with great violence. The cook turned, not at all surprised, and, patting her on the back, with a loud laugh, cried, "*Brava, Pepina! brava!*" ringing at the same moment a secret bell.

A young girl of sixteen, with a sweet, smiling countenance, answered the summons, and, immediately comprehending the case, approached the enraged creature, and putting her arms affectionately round her neck, whispered something in her ear. The expression of her face changed immediately to a

look of delight, and dropping the bucket, she followed the young attendant out of the room with peals of laughter.

"*Venite!*" said the Count, "you shall see how we manage our furies."

We followed across a garden, filled with the sweetest flowers, to a small room opening on a lawn. From the centre of the ceiling was suspended a hammock, and Pepina was already in it, swung lightly from side to side by a servant, while the attendant stood by, and, as if in play, threw water upon her face at every approach. It had all the air of a frolic. The violent laughter of the poor maniac grew less and less as the soothing motion and the coolness of the water took effect, and in a few minutes her strained eyes gently closed, the hammock was swung more and more gently, and she fell asleep.

"This," said the Count, with a gratified smile, "is my substitute for a forced shower-bath and chains; and this," kissing his little attendant on the forehead, "for the whip and the grim turnkey." I blessed him in my heart.

"Come," said he, as we left the sleeper to her repose, "I must show you my grounds."

We followed him to an extensive garden, opening from the back of the château, laid out, originally, in the formal style of an Italian villa. The long walks had been broken up, however, by beautiful arbours with grottoes in their depths, in which wooden figures, of the colour and size of life, stood or sat in every attitude of gaiety or grotesqueness. It was difficult, in the deep shadow of the vines and oleanders, not to believe them real. We walked on through many a winding shrubbery, perfumed with all the scented flowers of the luxuriant climate, continually surprised with little deceptions of perspective, or figures half concealed in the leaves, till we emerged at the entrance of a charming summer theatre, with sodded seats, stage, orchestra, and scenery, complete. Orange-trees, roses, and clematis, were laced together for a wall in the rear.

"Here," said the old man, bounding gaily upon the stage; "here we act plays, the summer long."

"What? not with your patients?"

"*Sì, signore!* Who else?" And he went on to describe to us the interest they took in it, and the singular power with which the odd idea seized upon their whimsical intellects. We had been accompanied, from the first, by a grave, respec-

table-looking man, whom I had taken for an assistant. While we were listening to the description of the first attempt they had made at a play, he started out from the group, and putting himself in an attitude upon the stage, commenced spouting a furious passage in Italian.

The Count pointed to his forehead, and made a sign to us to listen. The tragedian stopped at the end of his sentence, and after a moment's delay, apparently in expectation of a reply, darted suddenly off and disappeared behind the scenes.

"*Poveretto!*" said the Count, "it is my best actor!"

Near the theatre stood a small chapel, with a circular lawn before it, on which the grass had been lately much trodden. It was surrounded partly by a green bank, and here the Count seated us, saying, with a significant look at me, that he would tell us a story.

I should like to give it you in his own words—still more with his own manner; for never was a tale told with more elegance of language, or a more natural and pleasant simplicity. But a sheet of "wire-wove" is not a Palermitan Cavaliere, and the cold English has not the warm eloquence of the Italian. He laid aside his hat, ordered fruit and wine, and proceeded.

"Almost a year ago, I was called upon by a gentleman of a noble physiognomy and address, who inquired very particularly into my system. I explained it to him, at his request, and he did me the honour, as you gentleman have done, to go over my little establishment. He seemed satisfied, and, with some hesitation, informed me that he had a daughter in a very desperate state of mental alienation. Would I go and see her?"

"This is not, you know, gentlemen, a public institution. I am crazy," he said it very gravely, "quite crazy—the first of my family of fools on this particular theme—and this asylum is my toy. Of course it is only as the whim seizes me that I admit a patient; for there are some diseases of the brain, seated in causes with which I wish not to meddle.

"However, I went. With the freedom of a physician, I questioned the father, upon the road, of the girl's history. He was a Greek, a prince of the Fanar, who had left his degraded people in their dirty and dangerous suburb at Constantinople, to forget oppression and meanness in a voluntary exile. It was just before the breaking out of the last Greek revolution, and so many of his kinsmen and friends had been

sacrificed to the fury of the Turks, that he had renounced all idea of ever returning to his country.

“And your daughter?”

“My dear Katinka, my only child, fell ill upon receiving distressing news from the Fanar, and her health and her reason never rallied after. It is now several years, and she has lain in bed till her limbs are withered, never having uttered a word, or made a sign which would indicate even consciousness of the presence of those about her.”

“I could not get from him that there was any disappointment of the heart at the bottom of it. It seemed to be one of those cases of sudden stupefaction, to which nervously sensitive minds are liable after a violent burst of grief; and I began, before I had seen her, to indulge in bright hopes of starting once more the sealed fountains of thought and feeling.

“We entered Palermo, and passing out at the other gate, stopped at a vine-laced casino on the lip of the bay, scarcely a mile from the city wall. It was a pretty, fanciful place, and on a bed in its inner chamber, lay the most poetical-looking creature I had ever seen out of my dreams. Her head was pillowed in an abundance of dark hair, which fell away from her forehead in masses of glossy curls, relieving, with a striking effect, the wan and transparent paleness of a face which the divinest chisel could scarce have copied in alabaster. *Dio mia!* how transcendant was the beauty of that poor girl.”

The Count stopped and fed his memory, a moment, with closed eyes upon the image.

“At the first glance, I inwardly put up a prayer to the Virgin, and determined, with her sweet help, to restore reason to the fairest of its earthly temples. I took up her shadow of a hand, and spread out the thin fingers in my palm, and as she turned her large wandering eye toward me, I felt that the blessed Mary had heard my prayer, ‘You shall see her well again,’ said I confidently.

“Quite overcome, the Prince Ghika fell on the bed and embraced his daughter’s knees in an agony of tears.

“You shall not have the *seccatura*, gentlemen, of listening to the recital of all my tedious experiments for the first month or two. I brought her to my house upon a litter, placed her in a room filled with every luxury of the East, and suffered no one to approach her except two Greek attendants, to whose services she was accustomed. I succeeded in partially restoring animation to her benumbed limbs by friction, and made

her sensible of music, and of the perfumes of the East, which I burned in a pastille-lamp in her chamber. Here, however, my skill was baffled. I could neither amuse nor vex. Her mind was beyond me. After trying every possible experiment, as it seemed to me, my invention was exhausted, and I despaired.

"She occupied, however, much of my mind. Walking up and down yonder orange-alley one sweet morning, about two months ago, I started off suddenly to my chamber with a new thought. You would have thought me the maddest of my household, to have seen me, gentlemen! I turned out by the shoulders the *regazza*, who was making my bed, washed and scented myself, as if for a ball, covered my white hairs with a handsome brown wig, a relic of my coxcombical days, rouged faintly, and, with white gloves, and a most youthful appearance altogether, sought the chamber of my patient.

"She was lying with her head in the hollow of her thin arm, and, as I entered, her dark eyes rested full upon me. I approached, kissed her hand with a respectful gallantry, and in the tenderest tones of which my damaged voice was susceptible, breathed into her ear a succession of delicately-turned compliments to her beauty.

"She lay as immovable as marble, but I had not calculated upon the ruling passion of the sex in vain. A thin flush on her cheek, and a flutter in her temple, only perceptible to my practised eye, told me that the words had found their way to her long-lost consciousness.

"I waited a few moments, and then took up a ringlet that fell negligently over her hand, and asked permission to sever it from the glossy mass in which the arm under her head was literally buried.

"She clutched her fingers suddenly upon it, and glancing at me with the fury of a roused tigress, exclaimed in a husky whisper, '*Lasciate me, signore!*'

"I obeyed her, and, as I left the room, I thanked the Virgin in my heart. It was the first word she had spoken for years.

"The next day, having patched myself up more successfully, in my leisure, in a disguise so absolute that not one even of my pets knew me as I passed through the corridor, I bowed myself up once more to her bedside.

"She lay with her hands clasped over her eyes, and took no notice of my first salutation. I commenced with a little railery, and, under cover of finding fault with her attitude, contrived to pay an adroit compliment to the glorious orbs she

was hiding from admiration. She lay a moment or two without motion, but the muscles of her slight mouth stirred just perceptibly, and presently she drew her fingers quickly apart, and looking at me with a most confiding expression in her pale features, a full sweet smile broke like sudden sunshine through her lips. I could have wept for joy.

"I soon acquired all the influence over her I could wish. She made an effort, at my request, to leave her bed, and in a week or two, walked with me in the garden. Her mind, however, seemed to have capacity but for one thought, and she soon began to grow unhappy, and would weep for hours. I endeavoured to draw from her the cause, but she only buried her face in my bosom, and wept more violently, till one day, sobbing out her broken words almost inarticulately, I gathered her meaning. She was grieved that I did not *marry her!*

"Poor girl!" soliloquised the Count, after a brief pause, "she was only true to her woman's nature. Insanity had but removed the veil of custom and restraint. She would have broken her heart before she had betrayed such a secret, with her reason.

"I was afraid at last she would go melancholy mad, this one thought preyed so perpetually on her brain—and I resolved to delude her into the cheerfulness necessary to her health by a mock ceremony.

"The delight with which she received my promise almost alarmed me. I made several delays, with the hope that in the convulsion of her feelings a ray of reason would break through the darkness; but she took every hour to heart, and I found it was inevitable.

"You are sitting, gentlemen, in the very scene of our mad bridal. My poor grass has not yet recovered, you see, from the tread of the dancers. Imagine the spectacle. The chapel was splendidly decorated, and, at the bottom of the lawn, stood three long tables, covered with fruits and flowers, and sprinkled here and there with bottles of coloured water (to imitate wine), sherbets, cakes, and other such innocent things as I could allow my crazy ones. They were all invited."

"Good God!" said the surgeon, "your lunatics?"

"All—all! And never was such a sensation produced in a household since the world was created. Nothing else was talked of for a week. My worst patients seemed to suspend for a time their fits of violence. I sent to town for quantities of tricky stuffs, and allowed the women to deck themselves

entirely after their own taste. You can conceive nothing like the business they made of it. Such apparitions! *Santa Maria!* shall I ever forget that Babel?

"The morning came. My bride's attendants had dressed her from her Grecian wardrobe; and, with her long braid parted over her forehead, and hanging back from her shoulders to her very heels, her close-fitted jacket of gorgeous velvet and gold, her costly bracelets, and the small spangled slippers upon her unstockinged feet, she was positively an angelic vision of beauty. Her countenance was thoughtful, but her step was unusually elastic, and a small red spot, like a rose-leaf under the skin, blushed through the alabaster paleness of her cheek.

"My maniacs received her with shouts of admiration. The women were kept from her at first with great difficulty, and it was only by drawing their attention to their own gaudier apparel that their anxiety to touch her was distracted. The men looked at her as she passed along like a Queen of Love and Beauty, and their wild, gleaming eyes, and quickened breaths showed the effect of such loveliness upon the unconcealed feelings. I had multiplied my attendants, scarce knowing how the excitement of the scene might affect them; but the interest of the occasion and the imposing decencies of dress and show seemed to overcome them effectually. The most sane guests at a bridal could scarcely have behaved with more propriety.

"The ceremony was performed by an elderly friend of mine, the physician to my establishment. Old as I am, gentlemen, I could have wished that ceremony to have been in earnest. As she lifted up her large liquid eyes to heaven, and swore to be true to me till death, I forgot my manhood and wept. If I had been younger—*ma, che porcheria!*

"After the marriages the women were invited to salute the bride, and then all eyes in my natural party turned at once to the feast. I gave the word. Fruits, cakes, and sherbets disappeared with the rapidity of magic, and then the music struck up from the shrubbery, and they danced—as you see by the grass.

"I committed the bride to her attendants at sunset, but I could with difficulty tear myself away. On the following day I called at her door, but she refused to see me. The next day and the next I could gain no admittance without exerting my authority.

"On the fourth morning I was permitted to enter. She had resumed her usual dress, and was sad, calm, and gentle. She said little, but seemed lost in thought to which she was unwilling or unable to give utterance.

"She has never spoken of it since. Her mind, I think, has nearly recovered its tone, but her memory seems confused. I scarce think she remembers her illness and its singular events as more than a troubled dream. On all the common affairs of life she seems quite sane, and I drive out with her daily, and have taken her once or twice to the Opera. Last night we were strolling on the Marina, when your frigate came into the bay, and she proposed to join the crowd and go off to hear the music. We went on board, as you know; and now, if you choose to pay your respects to the lady who refused to waltz with you, take another sip of your sherbet and wine and come with me."

To say more would be trespassing, perhaps, on the patience of my readers, but certainly on my own feelings. I have described this singular case of madness and its cure because I think it contains in itself the seeds of much philosophy on the subject. It is only within a very few years that these poor sufferers have been treated otherwise than as the possessors of incarnate devils, whom it was necessary to scourge out with unsparing cruelty. If this literal statement of a cure in the private mad-house of the eccentric Conte —, of Palermo, induce the friends of a single unfortunate maniac to adopt a kind and rational system for his restoration, the writer will have been repaid for bringing circumstances before the public which have since had much to do with his own feelings.

AN UP-TOWN CRISIS;

OR, MRS. LUTHER LEATHER'S FIRST "FRIDAY MORNING."

It was one o'clock, in a certain new four-story house, within fashionable reach of Union Square. The two drawing-rooms, with the folding doors sheathed to the glass handles, were in faultless order. There was a fire in one of the grates to take off the smell of the new furniture and the chill of a November day; and just audible was the tick of a showy French clock, wound up for the first time, and expected to swing its pendulum that morning and thereafter in the "first society" of New York.

As the unsuspecting and assenting clock struck one, there was a rustle of silk down the banisters of the staircase, and the lady of the house (the scaffolding of a well-built woman who had fallen in) sailed into the room.

"Betsey!—that is to say, Judkins!—are you there?" she inquired, as she gave the blue curtains of the front windows a twitch each.

"Yes, mem," said a voice from the little verandah room in the rear.

"Is the chocolate hot?"

"Bilin', mem!"

"Now, Judkins, you remember all Mr. Cyphers told you about how to behave when the ladies come in there?"

"I can't help it, Mrs. Leathers!" said the invisible speaker, without answering the question, "but it flusters me to be called 'Judkins,' so blunt and sudden-like! I shall upset this chocolate pot, I know I shall, if you call me so when there's company. Why, it's just like hearing my poor, dead husband called up out of his grave, Mrs. Leathers! If you please, mem, let it be 'Betsey,' or 'Mrs. Judkins'—least-wise till I get used to it, somehow?"

But this remonstrance had been heard before, and the mistress of the aggrieved Mrs. Judkins paid no attention to it. She had been assured, by fashionable Mr. Cyphers, that head maids in "first families," were always called by their surnames, for it implied a large establishment, with two classes of servants—the chambermaids and kitchen scrubs being the only legitimate Sallys and Betseys.

A ring at the bell, while Judkins was meditating another remonstrance, suddenly galvanized Mrs. Leathers into the middle of the sofa, facing the door; and there she sat, as composed as if she had been sitting an hour for her picture, when the gentleman whose advice had just been acted upon, was shewn in by the new footman.

Like every unfashionable rich man's ambitious wife, Mrs. Leathers had one fashionable male friend—her councillor in all matters of taste, and the condescending guide of herself and her husband's plebeian million through the contempts which form the vestibule to "good society." Mr. Theodore Cyphers was one of two dwindled remainders to a very "old family"—a sister, who seemed to be nothing but the family nose walking about in a petticoat, sharing with him the reversed end of cornucopial ancestry. He was, perhaps,

thirty-five, of a very genteel ugliness of personal appearance, good-humoured, and remarkably learned upon the motives, etiquette, and usages of fashionable society. Of a thought unconnected with the art of gentility, or of the making of a penny, Mr. Cyphers was profoundly incapable. Skill at thinking, indeed, would have been a superfluity, for he had had a grandfather, in a country where grandfathers are fewer and more prized than anywhere else, and he had only to do nothing and be highly respectable. The faculty of earning something would scarcely have bettered his condition, either, for his rarity as an unemployed gentleman, in a city where excessive industry is too universal to be a virtue, gave him that *something to be known by*, which it is the very devil to be without. What paid for Mr. or Miss Cyphers's sustenance and postage, was one of the few respectable mysteries of New York. He had now and then a note discounted by the house of Leathers and Co., Wall-street; but of course it was not taken up at maturity by his attentions to *Mrs.* Leathers, nor have we any knowledge that these promises of Cyphers to pay, were still under indefatigable renewal up to the date of the great stockholder's wife's first "Friday Morning."

It was in expectation of a proper "reception" call, that Mrs. Leathers had taken her seat upon the sofa, and, upon the appearance of Mr. Cyphers, she came out of her attitude with a slight look of disappointment.

"I have dropped in early, my dear friend," said he, "to see that everything is *comme il faut*. Bless me, how light the room is! Nobody would come twice where there is such a glare on the complexion! Will you allow me to call Cæsar to shut the outside blinds? Cæsar!" he cried, stepping back to the entry to recall the man who had let him in.

But no Cæsar answered, for the black footman had a surname as well as Betsy Judkins, and if *she* was to be called "Judkins," *he* would be called "Fuzzard," and he would answer to nothing else.

"It cannot be permitted, my dear Mrs. Leathers!" expostulated Mr. Cyphers, when the man carried his point, and shut the blinds to an order given him by the name of Fuzzard; "a head servant, with a white cravat, is the only man who can go by a surname in a genteel family. A trifle—but little things show style. Pay the man more wages to let himself be called Cæsar, but call him *Cæsar*! Pardon me!" (continued Mr. Cyphers, suddenly changing to an apologetic

cadence,) "might I venture to suggest a little change in your toilette, my dear madam?"

"Mine!" cried Mrs. Leathers, colouring slightly, but looking as frightened as if she had been pulled back from a precipice. "Why, Mr. Cyphers, this is the very last fashion out from Paris! I hope—I trust—why, what do you mean, Mr. Cyphers?" and Mrs. Leathers walked to the pier glass and looked at herself, behind and before, in rapid succession.

"For the Opera, very well, my dear friend," he replied, appealingly, "or for a bridal call, or a *fête champêtre*. It is as pretty a three-quarter toilette as ever I saw, and you look quite lovely in it, dear Mrs. Leathers, but—"

"But what, I should like to know?"

"Why, in your own house, you see, it is stylish to be rather *under-dressed*; as if seeing people were such an everyday matter, that you had not thought it worth while to appear in more than your ordinary toilette."

"And so everybody in my own house is to look well but *me*!" remonstratively exclaimed Mrs. Leathers.

"No—pardon me; morning caps and well studied *negligés* are very becoming; but it is not *that* exactly. Let me explain the principle to you. Sitting up in showy dress to receive calls, looks (does it not?) as if you made a great event of it; as if the calls were an unusual honour—as if you meant to be extremely deferential towards your visitors."

"But *they* are splendidly dressed when they make the calls, Mr. Cyphers!"

"Yes, but it is, as one may say, open to supposition that they are going somewhere else, and have only taken your house in their way—don't you see? And then, supposing nobody comes—a thing that might happen, you know, my dear Mrs. Leathers; why, there you are—in grand toilette—evidently expecting somebody; of course mortified, yourself, with the failure of your *matinée*, and, what is worse, *seen* to be mortified, by your neighbours across the way!"

"La! mercy! of course!" exclaimed Mrs. Leathers, discovering that there was a trap or two for the unwary in "good society," of which she had been entirely unsuspicious; "but what am I to do? I have no time to dress over again! Mrs. Ingulphus might be here, and—"

"Oh!" interrupted Cyphers, with a prophetic foreboding that (spite of his influence with Mrs. Ingulphus, and the hundred and fifty "At home on Friday mornings" which had

been left on people she did not know,) Mrs. Leathers would have very few visitors for many a Friday morning yet to come, "Oh, my dear Madam, you are abundantly in time. Pray go up and slip into your prettiest demi-toilette, and take your chance of any one's coming. It looks well, in fact, not to be ready when people call; not to have expected them so early, as it were. While you are gone, by-the-bye, I will make a little arrangement of your place to sit, etc., etc., which strikes me, at this moment, as a matter we had quite overlooked. Go, my dear Mrs. Leathers!"

It was upon the call of Mrs. Ingulphus, so confidently alluded to by Mrs. Leathers, that Mr. Cyphers secretly built all his hope of making his friend fashionable. Mrs. Ingulphus' carriage, seen at any door for half an hour, was a sufficient keystone for a new aspirant's arch of aristocracy; but of such demonstration, Mrs. Ingulphus was exceedingly chary. The sagacious leader of fashion knew that her house must, first of all, be attractive and amusing. She was too wise to smother its agreeableness altogether, with people who had *descended* from grandfathers; but, to counteract this very drowse of dwindledom, she required, of the grandfatherless, either beauty or talent. Mr. Cyphers, in making interest for Mrs. Leathers, had not pleaded her wealth. That was now so common as to have ceased to be a distinction, or, at least, it was a distinction which, in mounting to Mrs. Ingulphus's drawing-room, Mrs. Leathers must leave in the gutter with her carriage.

What Mrs. Leathers was like, after getting inside a door, was the question. She might be dull, if she was Knickerbockatic—low-born, if stylish and beautiful—scandalized, if willing to undertake wall-flowers and make her fascinations useful, but she must be something beside rich and vulgar. Cyphers could plead for her on none of the usual grounds, but, with a treacherous ingenuity, he manufactured an attraction which was, in fact, a slander on Mrs. Leathers. He reminded Mrs. Ingulphus that foreigners liked a house where the married ladies would flirt, and whispered, confidentially, that Mrs. Leathers had a dull money-bag for a husband, and (to use his own phrase), "would listen to reason."

Mrs. Ingulphus said she would think of it, and, upon this encouragement, Cyphers cherished a hope that she would call.

With the aid of Judkins and Fuzzard, Mr. Cyphers, on Mrs. Leathers's disappearance, made some important changes in the furniture of the front drawing-room. A fancy writing-

desk was taken out from under the pier-table, opened, and set upon a work-stand in the corner, the contents scattered about in epistolary confusion, and a lounging chair wheeled up before it. With some catechising, Judkins remembered an embroidered footstool in one of the closets up stairs, and this was sent for and placed in front of the *fauteuil*. The curtains all let down, except one, and the sofa wheeled up with its back to this one entrance for the light—Mr. Cyphers saw that he could do no more.

“Now, my very expeditious Mrs. Leathers,” he said, as she entered, in an unobjectionable morning dress, and a cap rather becoming, “one little word more of general directions. Ladies love to sit with their backs to the light, in a morning call, and as the sofa is placed now, they will easily take a seat in a becoming position, and without any inconvenient drawing up of a chair. As to yourself, sit you at this desk and write——”

“Bless me! I have nothing to write!” interrupted Mrs. Leathers.

“Oh, copy an advertisement from a newspaper, if you like,” resumed her polite instructor, “but write something, and let it be upon note paper. You must *seem* to be passing your morning quite independently of visits, and to be rather broken in upon than otherwise, by any one’s coming in. Fashionable people you know, admire most those who can do without them. I think that’s in Pelham.”

“La! and must I write till somebody comes?”

“Dip your pen in the ink when the bell rings, that’s all; and write till their coming in makes you look up, suddenly and unconsciously, as it were. Stay—suppose I sit in your chair, and show you how I would receive a call? You are the visitor, say, and I am Mrs. Leathers?”

Mr. Cyphers crossed his feet, in an elongated position, upon the embroidered footstool, and threw his handkerchief over them in imitation of a petticoat, just disclosing a toe and an instep; then, taking up a pen, he went through the representation of a lady surprised, writing, by a morning call. As, upon Mrs. Leathers’ trying to do it after him, he found there were several other points in her attitude and manners which required slight emendation, we will leave these two at their lessons above stairs, and take a look into the basement parlour of the story below.

PART II.

THE LEATHERS' BASEMENT.

A PAIR of beautiful partridges, cooked to a turn, had just succeeded a bass, done in port-wine sauce; the potatoes were hot, and the pint bottle of champagne had given place to a decanter of sherry at the right hand of Mr. Luther Leathers, dining alone in his basement parlour. A fire of bituminous coal burned very brightly in the grate. Dividing her attention between watching the blaze, and looking up placidly to the face of the stock-broker as he soliloquised over his dinner, sat a hunch-back girl of nineteen or twenty, carefully propped on a patent easy-chair upon wheels. There was no servant waiting on table. The bread and water were within Mr. Leathers' reach, and the bell-handle was at the right hand of the pale and patient-looking little cripple in the corner.

"Lucy, my dear girl," said the carver of the partridge, holding up a bit of the breast of the bird upon his fork, "I wish I could persuade you to take a bit of this. See how nice it looks!"

"I know you wish it," she answered, with an affectionate half smile, "and you would give me your own health to enjoy it, if you could, but I have no appetite to-day—except sympathy with yours."

Leathers was a short, stout man, of about forty. He had a face roughly lined with anxiety, and a knit contraction of brows, which showed a habit of forcibly contracting his attention at short notice. The immediate vicinity of his mouth, however, was pliable and good-humoured, and, in fact, looked as if neither care nor meanness had ever been permitted to have a pull upon it. His hair was pushed rudely away from a compact, well-filled forehead, the lids were habitually drawn together around his small twinkling grey eyes, and his head was set forward upon his shoulders, in the attitude of one giving close attention. A very carelessly-tied cravat, coat-sleeves turned back over the wrist, and hands that evidently never wore a glove, showed that the passion for fashionable life which reigned up stairs, had little influence on the thoughts or toilettes in the basement below.

Yet to the policy or proceedings of his wife, to her expensiveness, or her choice of friends, her hours of going or coming, her intimacies or her ambitions, Mr. Leathers made no manner of objection. He differed wholly from her in her valuation

of things and people, and, perhaps, there was a little dislike of trouble in his avoidance of the desperate task of setting her right; but there was another and less easily divined reason for his strange letting of Mrs. Leathers have her own silly way so entirely. There was a romantic chivalry of mind, laid away, unticketed and unsuspected by himself, in a corner of his capacious brain, and, silly woman as she was, he had married her for love. In the suburb where he had found her, she was a sort of school-girl belle, and, as he had not then struck his vein of prosperity, and was but a poor clerk, with his capacities unsuspected, her station in life was superior to his, and he had first taken her to his bosom with the feeling of a plebeian honoured with the condescending affection of a fair patrician.

To this feeling of gratitude, though they had so essentially changed places—he having given her a carriage as a millionaire's wife, and she having only grown silly and lost her beauty—he remained secretly and superstitiously loyal. It was his proud pleasure to give her everything she could ask for, and he still retained his nominal attitude as the receiver of favour. He never, by look or word, let Mrs. Leathers understand that the promise of eternal love was not a promise religiously to pay. Of the dis-illusion in his heart—of his real judgment of her character—of the entire abandonment, by his reason, of all the castles in the air for which he had romantically married—she, fortunately, never had a suspicion, or asked a question, and he would have cut off his hand sooner than enlighten her. In public, he assumed a manner of respect and devotion, because his good sense told him there might be those who would think ill of her if he did not. Ignorant of the motive, and his appearance not being fashionable, Mrs. Leathers would often rather have been waited on by Mr. Cyphers, and this the husband saw without uneasiness, and would have yielded to, but for the wish to serve her, in spite of herself. With this single exception of occasional contradictoriness, and the exercise of quiet and prior authority—as to his own hours of dining, and his own comforts, and those of hunchback Lucy, in the basement, the stock-broker and his establishment were under the apparently complete control of Mrs. Leathers, and, thereby, in a state of candidacy for admission into the list of New York fashionable aristocracy.

Of course, Leathers, the stock-broker, had a heart; and, like other hearts, human and disappointed, it might have buried its

hopes without a funeral, and sought consolation elsewhere without a dram. It was necessary that he should love and love well. How long a want of this nature may go unexplained in the breast that feels it—the love-needing man being miserable, he knows not why—depends on circumstances; but, as Leathers was beginning to turn his un-escapable business faculty of attention upon himself to see what the deuce he wanted, and how to get it, he was accidentally appointed, by the whim of a nominating committee, one of the wardens of a poor-house. Compelled, for his character's sake, to visit and report upon the condition of this establishment, he chanced to see in one of the wards, a little orphan hunchback, whose pitiful and delicate face excited his compassion. His unemployed heart sprang to the child—he adopted her and took her home—gave Mrs. Leathers a carriage and horses on the same day to appease and propitiate her—and thenceforward had an object of affection, which (engrossed with business as he was,) sufficed to fill the void in his existence.

Lucy had no other name, that she knew of, but that was enough. Her education had been such as she could pick up in an alms-house, but she was fond of reading, and passionately fond of music, and when her benefactor was not at home, she was happy with her books in the arm-chair, or with her piano, and Mrs. Leathers seldom saw her except at breakfast. Lucy thought the stock-broker an angel, and so, to her, he was. He loved her with a tear in his throat, and kissed her small, white forehead at night and morning, with a feeling many a brilliant beauty has sighed in vain to awaken. At half-past three, every day, Leathers alighted from the omnibus, at his own house, having, perhaps, passed his wife in her carriage, on his way up from Wall-street, and with an eager happiness, unexplained to himself, went in at the basement door and sat down to his punctual dinner. Lucy dined with him, or sat by the fire. From the moment of his entering she had no thought, wish, or attention, for anything but him. Her little thin lips wore an involuntary smile, and her soft, blue eyes fairly leaned up against his heart in their complete absorption in what he said. She showed the most pleasure, however, when he talked most about himself, and, by questions and leadings of the conversation, she drew from him, daily, the history of his morning, his hopes, successes, obstacles, or disappointments.

He did not confess to her, for he did not confess to himself,

why this or that "operation" had pleased him, but there was sympathy in having its mere mention heard with earnest attentiveness, and he felt expanded and lightened at heart by her smile or nod of congratulation. This daily recital, with its interruptions and digressions, usually occupied the hour of dinner, and then, genial with his glass of wine and his day's work, Leathers drew up his chair to Lucy's, and had no earthly desire, save the passing of his evening between her talk and his newspaper.

Little stuff for poetry as there would seem to be in Wall-street mornings, Leathers was not undramatic, in his view of his own worldly position, and in his descriptions of business operations to Lucy. He had, early in life, looked askance, with some bitterness, at people with whom he could never compete, and at refinements and advantages he could never attain. Too sensible a man to play a losing game at anything, he had stifled his desire to shine, and locked down the natural chivalry, for which, with his lack of graces, he was so certain to lack appreciation. In giving up all hope of distinction in matters of show, however, he had prepared himself to enjoy more keenly the satisfaction of controlling those who were its masters, and it was this secret feeling of supremacy over the very throne of the empire that had rejected and exiled him, which gave his business the zest of a tourney, and made him dwell on its details, with delight in Lucy's eager and sympathetic listening.

The household, in short, went on very harmoniously. Mrs. Leathers was never up at breakfast, and usually made her dinner of the lunch in her boudoir, at which Mr. Cyphers daily played a part, and drank his bottle of champagne. Leathers was asleep when *she* went to bed, she asleep when *he* got up; she spent money without stint, and used her carriage as she and Mr. Cyphers pleased, and that made all comfortable *above* stairs. *Below*, Leathers was autocrat undisputed, and all was happiness there.

PART III.

WILL MRS. INGULPHUS CALL?

By the French clock it was getting towards half-past four in the drawing-room. At five minutes to four Mrs. Leathers had ordered Fuzzard to oil the joint of the door-bell, for it was inconceivable that nobody should have come, and perhaps

the bell wouldn't ring. Ladies in good society would give up an acquaintance rather than split their gloves open with straining at a tight bell-handle—so Mr. Cyphers seriously assured her.

The afternoon wore on, and still no sign of a visitor. Of her unfashionable acquaintances, she was sure not to see one, for on them Mrs. Leathers had left "At Homes" for Saturday, to preserve an uncontaminated "Friday" for the list made out by Mr. Cyphers.

Mrs. Leathers walked the room nervously, and at every turn, looked through the lace curtain of her front window.

"I'll move from this house," said the unhappy woman, twisting her handkerchief around her elbow and thumb, "for there are those Sneden girls opposite with their bonnets on, peeping through the blinds, and, if nobody comes, they'll stay away themselves and tell everybody else. Mr. Cyphers! if some carriage don't stop at the door before dark I shall die! How came you to put those nasty Snedens on the list, Mr. Cyphers? To leave a card and not have it returned is so mortifying!"

"Nasty Snedens, as you say," echoed Cyphers, "but it's no use to despise people till you have something to refuse. Wait till they want to come to a party because Mrs. Ingulphus is coming!"

"Why, do the Snedens know Mrs. Ingulphus?" inquired Mrs. Leathers, half incredulously.

"Know her?—she couldn't live without them!" and glad of anything to take off the attention of his friend from her disappointment, and enliven the dullness of that very long morning, Cyphers proceeded to define the Snedens.

"They are of a class of families," he continued, "common to every well-regulated society,—all girls and all regular failures—a sort of collapsed-looking troop of young ladies, plain and good for nothing, but dying to be fashionable. Every stylish person at the head of a set has one such family in her train."

"But what on earth can the Snedens do for Mrs. Ingulphus?" inquired Mrs. Leathers, rather listlessly.

"Why, they pick up her scandal, do her cheap shopping, circulate what she wants known, put down reports about her, collect compliments, entertain bores, praise her friends and ridicule her rivals—dirty work you may say, but *has to be done!* No 'position' without it—I assure you I have come to that

conclusion. In natural history there is a corresponding class—jackals. As clever what-d’ye-call-him says, a leader of fashion without a family of girls of disappointed prospects, is like a lion starving to death for want of jackals.”

“Twenty minutes to five!” digressed Mrs. Leathers; “I wonder if Mrs. Ingulphus is sick! Oh, Mr. Cyphers!” she continued, in a tone of as much anguish as she could possibly feel, “*can’t* you go round and implore her—beg her—anything to make her come—only this once! You told me you knew her so well, and she was certain to be here!”

Cyphers, in fact, had about given up Mrs. Leathers’ “Friday morning” as a failure; but he went on consoling. The light perceptibly lessened in the room. It was evident that the evening, without any regard to Mrs. Leathers’ feelings, was about to close over the visiting hour. Meantime, however, a scene had been going on in the basement, which eventually had an important influence on Mrs. Leathers’s “Friday mornings,” and of which we must therefore, give the reader a glimpse, though (our story is getting so long) we must confine ourselves to its closing tableau.

PART IV.

WHAT BROUGHT MRS. INGULPHUS.

A middle-aged man of a very high-bred mould of feature sat on the forward edge of a chair, leaning far over the table toward Mr. Leathers. He was dressed for a dinner party, and a pair of white gloves lay on the cloth beside him; but his face looked very little like that of a man on his way to a festivity. The sweat stood in large drops on his forehead and upper lip. His closed left hand was clutched in the palm of his right; his elbows were crowded to his side; his drawn-up shoulders crushed his white cravat into a wisp under his ears, and he sat with his mouth partly open, and eyes glaring upon the stock-broker as if expecting life or death from his immediate decision. Lucy sat in her chair looking on, but not with her ordinary calmness. Her lips were trembling to speak, and her thin hand clutched the handle of the lever which moved her patent chair, while her little bent back was lifted from its supporting cushion with the preparatory effort to wheel forward. Leathers, on whom her moist eyes were intently fixed, sat gazing on a bundle of papers, with his under lip pinched between his knuckle and thumb.

"Think, I implore, before you decide," said the visitor at last, breaking the silence. "You are my last hope! I could not plead with you this morning in Wall Street. I should have betrayed myself to people coming in. I did not then think of asking you again. I went home despairing. Afraid—yes, afraid, to stay alone with my own thoughts, I dressed to go out. My wife will be here in a moment to take me up, on her way to a dinner party. Oh God! how little she dreams we may be beggars to-morrow!"

He pressed his forehead between his two hands for a moment, and crowded his elbows down upon the table. Lucy rolled her chair a little forward, but Leathers motioned her back.

"You may think," he resumed, "that I might go to others—more intimate friends—in such extremity—family friends. But I know them. It would be utterly in vain, Mr. Leathers! I have no friend, much less a relative, in the world of the least use in misfortune. I had strained my credit to the last thread before coming to you in Wall Street. Why I suddenly resolved to come to you here, with no claim and at such an unfit hour for business, I know not. Instinct prompted. It seemed to me, while I was dressing, like the whisper of an angel!"

Leathers made a movement as if to speak.

"Take care, sir! for God's sake, take care! With one word, you may bind me to you while I live, with the gratitude of desperation, or you plunge me into ruin!"

The stock-broker took up the schedules of property which lay before him, and, after an instant's hesitation, pushed them across the table. During the half-hour, while proud Ingulphus, the millionaire, had been pleading with him for salvation from ruin, he had not been examining these, though his eyes were bent on them. He had satisfied himself of their unavailable value, before his refusal of the morning. The struggle in his heart between pity and prudence occupied him now. He knew that the chances were against his ever seeing again the very large sum necessary to prevent the present bankruptcy of Ingulphus, and that a turn in business might make the same urgently necessary to himself to-morrow—but his compassion was moved. He would have refused over again, outright and without ceremony, in Wall-street; but Ingulphus had taken him at a business disadvan-

tage, with his heart uppermost and open, and a pleading angel listening and looking on.

As the three sat silent, pity gradually overcoming the reluctant prudence of the stock-broker's judgment, there was a dash of wheels and hoofs upon the clear pavement near the curb-stone, a sudden pull-up, and the splendid equipage of the Ingulphuses stood at Leathers' door. Lucy's heart sank within her, for she had been praying to Heaven, with all her might of sympathy and inward tears, for the success of the plea, and she felt that the influence of this ostentatious arrival was unfavourable. Leathers looked over his shoulder into the street, and rose from his chair as the footman in livery crossed the sidewalk to ring the bell.

"For God's sake!" gasped the desperate pleader, in an agonised tone, knitting his hands together, and turning his face with the movement, as the stock-broker took his stand before the fire.

There was refusal in the attitude of Leathers, and in his brow, compressed with the effort to utter it.

The thin, white fingers of the little hunchback gently took the hand of her benefactor—now brought within her reach—and held it to her lips, while the tears dropped upon it freely.

"For *my* sake!" she murmured, in a tone of appealing and caressing tenderness, which a more hard-hearted man than her benefactor would have been troubled to resist.

Leathers turned and opened his large eyes with an expression of sudden tenderness upon her.

"For *your* sake be it, then, my sweet child!" he said, giving her a kiss with a rapid movement, as if his heart had joyfully broken through its restraint with the impulse she had lent it.

"And now, for the sake of this little angel, Mr. Ingulphus," he continued—

But the sudden rush of hope, and the instant relaxation of despair, were too much for the high-strung frame of the proud suppliant.

Excited to the utmost tension by anxiety, and, doubtless, for months overdone with sleeplessness and fatigue, his nervous system gave way, and, as Leathers turned to him from Lucy, he fell fainting from his chair.

To ring the bell, and send suddenly to the carriage for Mrs. Ingulphus, was the work of a moment; and to the astonishment of the Snedens opposite, and the mingled relief and

surprise of Cyphers and Mrs. Leathers, who were peeping at the carriage from the drawing-room window, the queen of the up-town fashion ran up the steps, in full dinner-dress, and went in at the Leathers'!

A present of a bouquet with the Snedens' card the next morning was the beginning of Mrs. Leathers' recognition by the discriminating pasteboard of fashion—but there are many, who (till they read this story,) have considered Mrs. Leathers' admission to the "Ingulphus' set," as one of the most inexplicable mysteries of this astounding century.

THE ICY VEIL;

OR, THE KEYS TO THREE HEARTS THOUGHT COLD.

ON an afternoon of Autumn's tranquillizing and thoughtful sweetness, the public band, in the Rosenthal of Leipsic, chanced upon an air that troubled the tears of a lady among the listeners. The music, which is sometimes stationed at a small garden nearer the town, was, for that day, at the *café*, deeper in the wood; and the small tables scattered around beneath the trees, were, at this hour, covered by the coffee and ices of the crowd, an untouched glass of sherbet (her apology for occupancy of a chair) standing before the lady to whose heart, the music, as it seemed, had an errand. It was an hour every way delicious, and to all there who had not, in their own bosoms, the discontent that dissolved the spell, the gardens of the Rosenthal were, for that evening, enchanted. The shadow under the thick grove was golden with the coming sunset. The gaily-painted porticoes of the little *maison de plaisance* looked festal with the addition of the bright colours of shawls and bonnets, students' caps, and soldiers' uniforms. The avenues around were thronged with promenaders. Flower girls curtsied about with baskets of roses.

The lady in the simple straw bonnet was alone, except that a servant, standing at the entrance of the wicket enclosure, unobtrusively kept her in sight. She was dressed with a skill detectible only by those of her own class in life, and, to all eyes, plainly; but the slender wreath of blue and crimson flowers which lay well back between the bonnet and the oval of her cheek, betrayed an unwillingness that the dark hair should be robbed wholly of embellishing contrast, and her

movements, though habitual and unthought of, were those of unerring elegance, impressed (indefinably, but effectually) with a singular pride and majesty. Beauty, such as is appreciable by common eyes, she had not. The freshness of youth had departed; but, to the few who know, at first sight, the lustrous up-gleaming from a warm heart deeply covered, she would, at this moment, have seemed more beautiful than in youth. The morning light throws a glitter upon the surface of the sea, that pleases the thoughtless; but the diver for pearls, finds more beauty in the unglittering profoundness of the sea's look at noon.

Betrayals, by angels, (it may be!) of what the pride would wrongfully conceal, are the tears, so little subject to the bidding of the eyes that shed them; and those to which the music of the Rosenthal had so unexpectedly called upon to give testimony, were destined to fulfil their mission. A new comer to the crowd had taken his seat at a table under the portico; a young man of remarkable beauty of person; and, at the same moment that, with a start of surprise, he rose to address the lady as a recognized acquaintance, her suffused eyes arrested his attention, and prevented what would have been, at that moment, an evident intrusion. Resuming his seat, and guarding against recognition, by bringing the lattice of the portico between himself and his discovery, he had leisure, during the playing of an overture of Mozart, to marvel at so singular a rencontre in a public garden of Leipsic; and still more, at such a miracle of things out of place, as tears in the cold eyes of a woman he had thought made of marble!

With his fancy weaving cobwebs of conjecture on these points, however, the attention of the stranger was, a second time, arrested. A Tyrolese glove-girl, in the drooping hat and short green petticoat of her country, had approached him with her box suspended over her shoulder, and, with a second glance at her face, he had smilingly removed his ring, and extended his hand to be fitted with a specimen of her merchandise; availing himself of the opportunity to study her features with the absorbing gaze of an artist. His mind was pre-occupied, however. Hours after, the peculiar value (artistically speaking) of the physiognomy he thus unconsciously stored away, became for the first time apparent to him, and he wondered that he could have parted, so carelessly, with a face so full of meaning. But his own features, beautiful to

a degree seldom seen in the person of man, were destined to be better remembered.

The music ceased suddenly, and the lady in the straw bonnet, followed at a distance by her servant, took her way along the meadow-path of the Rosenthal. After a few steps, she was overtaken by the artist.

"The Countess Isny-Frere, or her apparition, I believe!" he said, removing his hat and addressing her with the deference of a ceremonious acquaintance.

She stopped suddenly, with a look that began in unwelcome surprise, and ended in well-bred carelessness.

"I must rally, to think which it is that you see," she replied, "for (I have the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Tremlet, I believe) the sight of an English face has startled me, soul or body, quite out of Leipsic!"

"And may I ask, meantime, what Leipsic has done to deserve a visit from the Countess Isny-Frere?" he gaily continued; but the next instant he remembered that he had but just now seen tears in the eyes of the stately person he was addressing, and his tone and manner became suddenly thoughtful and subdued. The transition was one of insensible ease, however; the certainty that he was thus ministering to her chance mood gave him a confidence, the key to which she was little aware of having herself furnished; and, as they slowly paced the smooth walk of the Rosenthal, the two, who had never before met but as formal acquaintances, fell gradually far within the limits of ceremonious reserve.

The darkly-shaded avenue that alternately touches and recedes from the banks of the Elster, is like a succession of approaches to lovely pictures; so beautiful are the sudden disclosures of the secluded bends of the river, at the openings contrived for the purpose. At each opening, there is a seat beneath the trees, the swift waters curling its eddies to the bank on which it is placed, and he would be a cold observer of Nature who could pass such landscapes without availing himself of the opportunity to loiter. Seated in these successive nooks, and leisurely pacing the winding alleys that intervene, Tremlet and the Countess had each the leisure to weigh the expediency of extending acquaintance into friendship; though, in the mind of each, an under-current of wondering reverie kept pace with the conversation; each other's capability of natural and tender thoughtfulness being a mutual and most pleasurable surprise. To Tremlet, more particu-

larly, the riddle was inexplicable, for the Countess's simple and confiding ingenuousness was wholly irreconcilable with her character as a heartless leader of fashion. Her house, of all resorts of exclusiveness, in London, was the one, he believed, the most heartlessly frequented; and she herself known, even among her friends, by the appellation of the "cold Countess," was esteemed, by society at large, as the pre-eminent model of a worldling—proud, cautious, and passionless.

Tremlet's errand to Germany was briefly told. He was uniting a partly professional object with a summer's excursion. The great fair of Leipsic had drawn him hither from the Rhine, for in no other gathering in the world, perhaps, are there assembled so many varieties of strange costume and physiognomy; and in a week's jostling among the long-robed, and bearded Hebrews, the green-jacketed Tyrolese, the mild Hungarians, and the German mountaineers and students, he looked to find novel subjects for his pencil. But this was not all. He had been long seeking a model of female beauty for an unfinished picture; one which he designed for the *chef d'œuvre* of his pencil; and the peculiar quality of maiden countenance that was necessary to its completion, had evaded, thus far, both his search among the living, and his imaginative conception. As the subject of the picture had been suggested by one of the wild legends of Tieck, he thought it more probable that he should find the face also in the neighbourhood of the first inspiration.

"And, strangely enough," he added, after a moment's pause, "I saw a glove-girl in the garden where I met you, whose countenance impresses me more in remembrance than when I saw it: possibly one of those faces that lack but the heightening of their natural expression to become beautiful."

He stopped abruptly, recalling musingly the singular countenance of the Tyrolese, and mentally resolving to find her on the morrow, and induce her to sit to him for a portrait of careful study. The Countess at this moment chose the left of two paths; the one which she took leading in the direction opposite from the return through the Park.

"It is my turn at the confessional," she said, "and (she hesitated, colouring slightly) I presume it would be my best policy, if I am not to part from you before going further, to be frank as to the 'wherefore' of my summering here at Leipsic. Whole secrets," she added, smilingly, "are better kept than halves, and less dangerous if told."

She resumed, after a few steps onward.

"You will be surprised to discover how little mystery there need be, properly, in what looks at first sight so formidably mysterious—my giving up of friends and identity for four months in the year—but my friends in England should be as welcome to the secret as you will be, if they could comprehend it, or would give any credit, indeed, either to the simplicity of my life here, or its still more incredibly simple motive. You know how I live in London, I lack nothing there that can be given to a woman of wealth and position. But I have another home which is far sweeter to me—a small house in a village adjoining this park of the Rosenthal. The exterior of this little retreat, which I will presently show you, looks as it did when I first saw it—like the house of a German villager—but the interior is, of course, suited to my taste and liking. The village, by the way, is celebrated as having been the residence of Schiller, who lodged for some time in one of its humble houses, and wrote here his famous 'Song to Joy'—but it is a veritable village at this day, and, though a most desirable residence, as standing on the skirt of a Park which alone separates it from Leipsic, it is inhabited only by veritable villagers—myself hardly a noticeable exception. Here I have a faithful household of servants, who know me but by the German name of my husband's family—(by-the-bye, remember to address me in conversation as Madame Isn'y)—and who serve me without a question, as a widow who has reasons for being absent a great part of the year. But the sunset is losing its brilliancy. Let us hasten our steps towards this mysterious 'whereabout' of mine. Over a cup of tea, I may, perhaps, tell you its 'why and wherefore.'"

A sudden turn from the gravelled walk of the Park brought them to a rude and picturesque bridge over a mill-stream, and a narrow lane led thence to the village. The street upon which they entered was a common thoroughfare, between irregular rows of houses, each with its rough gate and shrubbery, and the humble entrance to one of these, which was in no way distinguished from the rest, was opened by the plainly dressed servant of the Countess. A small garden, arranged after the common manner of the country, separated the front door from the neighbour's wall.

The entry was of German simplicity, and a small room on the right, in which the Countess first, with mischievous for-

mality, requested Tremlet to be seated, was uncarpeted and furnished with the ill-contrived conveniences of a German parlour—evidently kept as a place of reception for any intrusive visitor whose curiosity might be troublesome. But, from the landing of the dark staircase leading to the second story, Tremlet entered an apartment occupying the whole upper floor of the house, and here he recognized, at once, a fitting home for the luxurious habits of the inmate. It was a blending of boudoir and library, in which there was nothing merely for show, but everything for luxurious ease—a charming abundance of fawn-coloured divans, bookcases and contrivances for comfort—the mirror panels so multiplying the recesses, and so deceiving the eye as to the space enclosed between the walls, that it seemed a little wilderness of indefinable extent and luxury. The single alteration that had been made in the exterior of the house, was in the long window, from the ceiling to the floor, which was of a single plate of glass, so clear that it was difficult to tell whether it was shut or open. This costly change in the humble architecture was on the side opposite from the street, invisible to the passers-by; and, as the house stood on the little acclivity of the village, the window commanded a lovely reach over the Rosenthal, with glimpses of the Elster.

An artist of genius is more than half poet, and Tremlet's appreciation of this unsuspected hiding-place of feminine caprice was glowingly complete. Left alone for a few minutes, he smiled as he buried himself in the silken cushions of a divan, remembering how formally he had visited in London the presiding spirit of this living romance, and how mistakenly from what he thus hastily saw of her, he had pronounced upon her character as cold and ostentatious. As yet, it is true, he was in the dark as to the motive of this singular seclusion; but her conversation in the Rosenthal had been of a thoughtful and unaffected earnestness, that satisfied him completely of the elevation and purity of the heart in which the motive had its source, however singular the whim by which it found its way to development.

A most delicious strain of music commenced suddenly. It was like that of a band stationed at just such a distance, that the articulation of the harmony and melody came to the room in which he sat, softened to the most dreamy degree short of indistinctness.

"That is Beethoven's Sonata to Giulietta," said the Count-

ess, entering, "and it is one of the most eloquent replies of music to the dumb questioning of a heart-ache that was ever vouchsafed to mortal inspiration. You must not think it theatrical in me to have surprised you with music," she added, with a deprecating humility, that sat very gracefully on her proud lips, "for, to tell you the truth, you have brought London eyes into my hitherto unseen seclusion, and I cannot resist feeling, for the moment, that the ideal of the spot is a little disenchanted. The music, which is ordinarily my only company, is so associated with my solitude that it will re-conjure the spirit of the spot—but, meantime, let me dissolve the mystery of its production."

The Countess touched a spring, which threw open one of the mirror panels of the library, and disclosed a little oratory, or chapel, decorated simply with one female figure of exquisite sculpture, whose face was hidden in prayer—the cross and the devotee both in chased silver. This again swung partly open, and showed a closet in the wall, filled with musical cylinders like the barrels of an organ.

"This, of course," she said, "is but a musical box on an extended scale, but it has very varied capabilities. It was constructed for me by an ingenious Swiss, who changes or adds to its numerous barrels at my pleasure; but I must own that I am as little fickle in my musical likings as in my fondness for poems, and I can scarce tire of a composition that has once moved me. You are aware that several of the composers of Germany have tried their hands upon 'Songs without words,' in imitation of this touching love-letter in music, which you have just heard, and which Beethoven addressed to the high-born Giulietta. By this, to my apprehension at least, they have advanced one chamber nearer to the inner sanctuary of feeling, of which common music, if I may so express it, fills only the ante-chamber. I have had all these 'Songs without words' added to my little musical oratory, and the barrels are so arranged that I can either select the melodies I want, or let them follow in a chance succession of several hours' continuance. I used to be fond of the harp: but playing requires an effort, and to think luxuriously during music, one should be the listener, and not the player. Any trouble with the procuring of music spoils it for me, and if the music is to be used as an habitual accompaniment to reverie, some such an obedient automaton as this must be resorted to."

Tremlet begged to listen to it in silence for awhile.

"It shall play, while we idle over our tea," said the Countess, after a few minutes of silent attention, "possibly in that time it may exorcise the English presence out of the room; but you are too new a comer to be admitted at once to the full luxury of silence."

The closet of music, with its costly intricacy of mechanism, was closed, and left to play. Its effects, softened with the shutting of the doors, were choral and orchestral, and, in wonderful resemblance to the performances of a troop of admirable musicians, it executed the delicious compositions chosen as food for reverie. The twilight had meantime died away, and as the room was flooded with a soft light from lamps unseen, Tremlet felt himself fully subject to the influence of the spot.

"It is indeed a place where one might forget the world," he said, at last.

"It is a place in which to rest from the world," replied the Countess, "and in that, you have the key of the use to which I devote it. You need not be reminded what London is—how wearisome its round of well-bred gaieties—how heartless and cold, its fashionable display. Providence, I think, has confined to a comparatively low level the hearty and joyous sympathies of our nature; and it avenges the humble, that the proud who rise above them, rise also above the homely material for happiness. An aristocrat I am doomed to be. I am, if I may so express it, irrevocably pampered, and must live and associate with the class, in which I have been thrown by accident and education. But how inexpressibly tedious to me is the round of such a life, the pains I have here taken to procure a respite from it, may, perhaps, partially convey to you. It is possible, probable indeed, that I entertain at my house, people who envy me the splendours I dispense, yet who are themselves happier than I. To young people, for whom it is a novelty, to lovers, whose happiness is wholly separable from all around them, to the ambitious, who use it as a convenient ladder, gay London life is (what any other life would be with the same additions) charming. But, to one who is not young, for whom love is a closed book, and who has no ambition in progress, this mere society, without heart or joyousness, is a desert of splendour. I walk through my thronged rooms, and hear, night after night, the same ceremonious nothings. I drive in my costly equipage, separated by its very costliness from the sympathy of the

human beings who pass me by. There are those who call themselves my intimate friends; but their friendship lacks homeliness and abandonment. Fear of committal, dread of ridicule, policy to please or repel, are like chains worn unseen on the tongues and hearts of all who walk the world at that level."

Tremlet listened without reply, except in looks expressive of assent.

"It has probably passed through your mind," continued the Countess, "that I might have found a seclusion, as complete as this, in a remote part of England. But I chose Germany for several reasons. I was partly educated here, and the language and habits of the people are like those of a native land to me. My husband's relatives, on one side of the descent, are German, and a presumed visit to these connexions furnishes the necessary excuse for absenting myself unattended. But, above all, the people are different, the pervading magnetism of the common air is as different as that of another planet. I see no society, it is true. My musical oratory and my books, are all the companionship I have within doors. But I go into the public gardens of the Rosenthal, (as in Germany a lady may,) not only fearing no intrusion, but receiving, as one of the crowd, my share of its social magnetism. The common enjoyment of the music of the band brings all in the crowd to a temporary common sympathy. Rid thus of the 'fine lady' separation between me and my kind, which I feel in England like a frozen wall, my heart expands, I cannot express to you how genially and breathingly! And now is all this comprehensible to you?" asked the Countess, crushing her handkerchief, with both hands upon her eyes, with the natural suddenness of an impassioned child.

The reply was one that gave no check to the expansion of heart on which she had entered.

"This is singular frankness on my part," she continued. "I presume I shall not discover immediately why I am thus unguardedly confiding in one, whom I have only known hitherto as an acquaintance. It is an instinctive impulse, however, and I trust it. I was hesitating before trying to express another charm of this seclusion to me—partly, because I feared I should find some difficulty in putting my meaning into language, and more, perhaps, because it will be the disclosure of a feeling which I have, as yet, hardly dared to summon up for my own

examination. In this joyous out-of-door society of Germany—in the general distribution of complaisance and regard, the interchange of kindly salutations between all classes, and the strong expressions of good will in which ordinary politeness is usually phrased—I find, somehow, a prolonging of the life-time of the affections—a continuance of verdure, as it were, into the desert of the age past loving. A wise woman submits, of course, with well-bred outward acquiescence, when the world's manner informs her that the love-summer of her youth is over. But it came upon *me* when my heart was in the most prodigal flowering of its tenderness—when my capacity to *give* love, at least, was growing, it seemed to me, hourly, of more value and profoundness. To abandon, *then*, all hope of loving—and with this unlavished wealth too in the heart—was society's bitter exaction. I submitted. I would not be the ridicule of the world, for pretensions to attractiveness I had outlived, nor would I be a mark for such attentions as are always ready for those who seem approachable through weakness. I was a widow, wealthy, and without children; and, if I would retain the pride of my position, and, particularly, if I would defy the malice of the envious, I must either marry a man older than myself, or show the seeming of a heart beyond all possible susceptibility. You yourself visited me in this latter character, and you know how unshrinkingly, when in England, I revolve, and shine in my icy orbit! Oh, I have a thousand times envied the beggar at my door! But this life must be lived on. Walls within walls—circumstances and feelings I cannot now explain to you—hedge in the necessity of my continuing the maintenance of this conspicuous station in England. Respite, however—breathing-time—is indispensable! To escape from those who so relentlessly measured my period of loveableness—to step out from my fixed place among those of mature years, though without a thought of resuming youth—to descend from the cold height of exclusiveness, and claim, once a year, my common share of common life and sympathy—for these privileges, and to relax tongue and heart in weeks of luxurious silence and self-abandonment—I contrived the retreat you have stumbled upon.”

“Did you think,” asked the Countess, touching the spring of the enchanted closet, and with a gesture compelling silence for the music, by way of obviating reply—“did you think that this formidable mystery had so little in it that was mysterious?”

* * * * *

With luxury, music, and complete isolation from the world, love ripens apace. It was one morning, but a fortnight after the chance meeting of the Countess and Tremlet, described in the foregoing pages, that the artist found himself, for the first time in his life, wholly unsusceptible of the seductive temptings of his pencil. He could not paint. Something more critical than any ordinary anxiety outweighed his art. There sat Jessonda, the Tyrolese, in the posture in which she was daily placed—for the character her portrait was to represent—the half-finished sketch on his easel fairly breathing with a new vision of beauty—but he saw, that day, neither the sketch nor Jessonda. The living original might well have inspired him, however, for love more intense than was expressed in her face and posture, never offered itself to be pictured. So, indeed, the artist had interpreted it, if one might believe his canvas—for her intense gaze of adoration was well copied, though with the addition of a lofty refinement of intellect breathing through the strangely expressive lineaments—but he had given his imagination credit for the love as well as the intellect portrayed before him.

With no suspicion of what so distracted his attention for that day, however, Jessonda was troubled. In the usually absorbed devotion of the artist to her portrait, in the flushed cheek and eager eye with which he gazed on the face she saw copied from her own, she had found stuff for dreams that made her capable of jealousy when that picture was neglected. She had half risen to leave him, when a servant entered with a letter. The door closed upon her as he broke the seal, and Jessonda and his picture were at once forgotten in the perusal—

“MY DEAR TREMLET: In the two days that I have exiled you from my presence, I have exiled my happiness also, as you well know without my confessing, but I needed to sleep and wake more than once, upon your welcome, but unexpected avowal. I fear, indeed, that I need much more time, and that reflection would scarce justify what I am now about to write to you. But my life, hitherto, has been such a succession of heart-chilled waitings upon Reason, that, for once, while I have the power, I am tempted to bound away with impulse, after happiness.

“Of course you understand in this an acceptance of your offer. But I have conditions to impose. It is possible that you may withdraw your offer when you know them. Yet they are so much of a character with our acquaintance, and with our intercourse, for the month into which we have crowded an

age, that I have strong hopes of your not finding them distasteful. Let me preface my exactions by some sort of apology, however, showing you, that is to say, the ground-work of the foible (if such you think it) which is to be humoured by your acquiescence.

"I have partially expressed to you, in conversation, how completely my whole life has been a sacrifice of natural preferences to worldly expediency. For my present station, such as it is, I have given gradually the entire provision made by nature for my happiness: my girlish joyfulness, my woman's power of loving, my hopes, my dreams, my sympathies, my person. I was forced to sacrifice an early affection, to marry for title and fortune. I have since been unceasingly called upon to choose between my heart's wishes and freedom from humiliation. You will say it was at my own risk if I preferred the latter; but in every important crisis of option, the threatened evils looked appalling, and the happiness comparatively partial. Meantime (I am quite ready to believe), my pride has been thus fed to a disease.

"Of course, there is something wrong from the world by these sacrifices. To most victims, the worldly advantages are a sufficient consolation. But fortune and title alone would not have continued to tempt me. I could be happy without homage, and with a hundredth part of the luxury I can command. But there is another privilege, accompanying high station coldly maintained, and bought by me with these same bitter sacrifices—a *disdainful independence* of the world that has so robbed us! What will you say if I tell you that this is what I am trying to preserve to myself *as a twin happiness with your love!* What will you think of me, if I confess to you, that the strongest feeling in my bosom, till you wakened love there, was resentment against society for the cruelties it has sown my life with! Individuals, of course, are blameless of design against me, but the cruelty lies in the pervading heartlessness of the class. In their mockery of everything but that which dazzles them—in their polished rejoicing over the downfall of any social superiority—lies the inevitableness of the submissions I resent. Is it strange, then, that *I wish to preserve an ascendancy over it, and remain above its sneer or its pity?* With the glow of tenderness now in my heart, I cannot find the bitter words to express to you how much I value this undeniable power of disdain—but this it is which seems to me the only equivalent I have wrung from the world—this

it is, which I look on as the true price of the heart sold, pulse by pulse, at the hateful bidding of the opinions of the class I live in! And (for you have already seen my drift) it is this privilege which an open marriage with you would endanger. You are ten years younger than I. Your character and tastes are peculiar. The qualities you love in me, ripen only in the meridian of life. We shall be happy in marriage, I have reason to believe. *But the world would not believe it!* Oh no! The first knowledge of the step would be received with a smile, and, with that smile, lightly as it would pass around, would fall from me, like a dream, the ascendancy in which lies my power.

"Of course you anticipate what I have to propose. I will but name it to you now, and explain its possibility when we meet. It is to *marry you privately*, here in Germany. After a week more in this sweet retirement, (for my time here is nearly expired,) I will leave you, and resume my apparently heartless life in England. You shall return to England soon yourself, also apparently single, and we will be known to the world but as we were—the 'cold Countess' Isny-Frere, and Tremlet, the unimpressible artist. The secret can be kept. More difficult things are done by the simplest people around us. Part of the year, we will pass in this retirement or another, and, with means so ample as mine, and a character so little open to suspicion of such a secret, innumerable varieties, in the masquerading part of our life, will always be possible.

"Do you not see, my gifted and beautiful lover, how I thus add, to the wealth of your affection, the jewel for which I sold all my happiness till I met you? Do not feel offended that in your love I have not forgotten it. We value what has cost us our heart's blood, though it be but a worthless trifle to another. Oh, you must let me preserve my icy veil between me and the world—preserve it, for my heart to beat behind it, in a heaven of every day affection. I plead for it with my whole soul—but—*it is yours to decide!* I began my letter thinking that I should inflexibly exact it. I could not hesitate, however, now, in a choice between it and you. I will marry you openly, if you so require.

"Come to me at sunset. Having once broken my wish to you, I can venture to talk of it. An now—impatient to press my lips upon your beautiful forehead—I record myself your

EDITH."

Another fortnight had elapsed. The golden light of

another autumnal sunset streamed into the painting room of Tremlet, at Leipsic. Around, against the walls, stood unfinished sketches, in oil, of the most peculiar faces and costumes that had been seen during the crowded fair just over. A Jew from Poland, with his shaggy fur cap, pelisse and shaggy beard; a Greek from Constantinople, in flowing Juktanilla and cap of scarlet; peasants and peasant girls, with the sunny hair and strange dresses of mountain Germany; pedlars from the Friuli, and Hungarians swathed in twine and tatters, were here transferred from the street to canvas—material to figure hereafter in groups of historical pictures. But, among these rough sketches (that, rude as they were, still showed the hand of the master) there was one subject finished with careful study—a *portrait of the Tyrolean glove-girl*—true to life, yet representing a quality of beauty, rare as the second rainbow! It stood now upon the painter's easel—a figure of matchless nobleness and grace—and the colours were fresh about the lips, where he had retouched them within the parting hour.

The original of this "*treasure trove*" (for such was the face of Jessonda to the artist) had just risen from the kneeling posture, in which she had bent herself to his elaborate pencil for an hour of almost every day since their first meeting in the Rosenthal; and she stood looking alternately at her portrait and at him, with compressed lips, and an expression far beyond a gratified curiosity.

With the eye of genius, Tremlet had seen, in this girl's embryal beauty, the look with which it would beam, were it perfected to the utmost capability of its peculiar type; and she saw now, on the easel, a beauty that could only be hers after years of culture, yet of which she still felt as conscious as of the swelling heart under her boddice of green. Her emotions had grown from day to day more tumultuous. While the artist looked on *her* beauty as on the fitting, but cold and shuttered tenement of an unrivaled angel of intellect, she looked on his, as on something already worthy of the idolatrous worship of that angel. The coupling of the two before her—herself, as made beautiful on canvas, and the artist, as he stood breathingly beautiful in the glowing light of the sunset—was an appreciation of fitness that might well have come to a brain less enamoured. Tremlet was as perfect in form and feature as a sculptor's ideal of Antinous. His personal advantages had (contradictorily

enough) increased by undervaluing; for, of the adulation that had been paid him in his first manhood, the greater part, of course, had come from the thoughtless and silly, and he had flung himself, with the reaction of disgust, upon the cultivation of qualities less open to common appreciation. Absorbed in his art, he had half lost the remembrance of his beauty; and nature, thus left to herself in one of her most felicitous combinations, added one grace more—that of a noble unconsciousness. After a few years of seclusion, his eminent promise in the art brought him back by a new gate to society, and it was as Tremlet, the distinguished artist, that he had been a formal visitor at the house of the Countess Isnny-Frere. His early shrinking from superficial admiration, however, had left a habit in his manners, that acted like an instinctive avoidance of the gay and youthful, and he passed for a dreamy man, as marble cold as he was splendidly handsome. The Countess had exchanged with him the politenesses of society without suspicion of his true nature. In the masked procession of London life, spirits the most congenial may walk side by side for years without recognition.

Upon Jessonda, the glove-girl, Tremlet had made an indelible impression, from the day she fitted his hand from her glove-case in the garden of the Rosenthal. His manner to her was soft and winning, without the forwardness against which she was habitually armed; and, possessed herself of mental superiority in the rough, she had recognised his nobleness without being able to define it. Vivid as was her admiration, however, she would probably have parted from him without the aspiring venture of loving him, if she had not seen disclosed, in the daily progress of her picture, an angel's ladder by which the heaven of an equality with him might be reached. She felt within her a vague consciousness of the character he had drawn in the elevated beauty of her portrait. She was capable, she thought, to become like this heightened semblance of herself. It explained her waking dreams. Her heart declared itself interpreted in the picture's expression. But prophetic flat-tery more bewildering was never addressed to mortal; and it was little wonder that the heart of Jessonda sprang to its interpreter. As she looked now upon the pictured foreshadowing of what she *might be*, and from that to the noble form that stood beside it, she saw, with a glowing soul, that, were it the picture of his wife, it would be a picture of his mate by nature. The chasm between her present self, and her

arrival at the lofty reach of this pictured equality, she shrank from measuring. Hope threw before it its glittering veil. Ah, poor Jessonda!

She took up from the floor her tall hat with its gold tassel. The band of Tyrolese merchants were already on their way southward, and she was waited for by her kinsmen at the gate of Leipsic.

"When shall we meet again?" asked Tremlet, taking her two hands kindly for a farewell.

She raised his hands hurriedly to her lips, choked back her emotion with a strong effort, and pointed to the picture.

"Remember me by that," she said, "not by what I am! When you see me again, I shall be like it!"

Another instant and she was gone.

Her voice lingered on the painter's ear, and after a few minutes of musing, he started to recall her, for her words suddenly assumed a new meaning to him; but another thought checked him, and he returned to his studio, oppressed with an embarrassing sadness. He lighted his lamp, and sat down to write to his bride, who, a few days before, had preceded him on her way to England.

* * * * *

It was five years after the acting of this chance romance at Leipsic, when Europe became filled with the murmur of a new renown; and, from her *débüt* at Vienna, the great songstress, —, made her way through adoring capitals toward London. Report spoke in wonder of the intellect that beamed through her expressive beauty, but with still more emphatic wonder at such passionate fervour in the acting of one, whose heart seemed invulnerable to love; and while articles of agreement were concluding at Brussels for her appearance at the Queen's Opera, the exclusives of London were delighted to know that they should first have a privileged sight of the unsusceptible enchantress, for the "cold Countess" had sent over a messenger, to engage her for a private concert.

A few days wore on, and her arrival in England was announced; and, on the morning of the day on which she was to sing at the concert of the Countess Isny-Frere, Tremlet, the artist, received, at his studio, the following brief letter:

"I promised to return to you when I should resemble my picture. It is possible that exile from your presence has marred more beauty than mental culture has developed, but the soul you drew in portrait has, at least, found its way to my

features, for the world acknowledges what you alone read prophetically at Leipsic. I have kept myself advised of your movements, with a woman's anxiety. You are still toiling at the art which made us acquainted, and, (thank God!) *unmarried*. To-night, at the concert of the Countess Isny-Frere, I shall sing to you, for I have taken pains to know that you will be there. Do not speak to me till you can see me alone, but hear me in my art before I abandon myself to the joy long deferred, of throwing myself at your feet with the fortune and fame it is now mine to offer you.

"Only yours,

JESSONDA."

But Jessonda did not sing for the Countess that night. The guests were assembled, and the leading performers of the opera were there, to accompany the new *prima donna*, when a note arrived, written apparently by her *dame de compagnie*, and announcing her sudden and unaccountable illness. As she had been seen driving in the Park that afternoon, apparently in perfect health, it was put down as one of the inexplicable caprices common to those intoxicated with sudden fame, and paragraphed upon, accordingly, in the morning papers. The disappointment to the Countess was less than to her guests, for she had lived, now five years, in a world of happiness little suspected by the gay world about her; but slight as it was, she chanced long to remember it by a coincidence. In her private journal, under the same date with the record of so comparative a trifle as a public singer's failure to appear at her concert, was recorded, with a trembling hand, the first cloud upon her life of secret happiness; her husband, Tremlet, having come to her, after the departure of her guests that night, with a gloom upon his spirits, over which her caresses, for the first time, had no power!

BORN TO LOVE PIGS AND CHICKENS.

THE guests at the Astor House were looking mournfully out of the drawing-room windows, on a certain rainy day of an October passed over to history. No shopping—no visiting! The morning must be passed in-doors. And it was some consolation, to those who were in town for a few days to see the world, that their time was not quite lost, for the assemblage in the large drawing-room was numerous and gay. A very dressy affair is the drawing-room of the Astor, and as full of eyes as a peacock's tail (which, by the way, is also a very

dressy affair). Strangers who wish to see and be seen (and especially "be seen!") on rainy days, as well as on sunny days, in their visits to New York, should, as the phrase goes, "patronize" the Astor. As if there was any *patronage* in getting the worth of your money,

Well—the people in the drawing-room looked a little out of the windows, and a great deal at each other. Unfortunately, it is only among angels and underbred persons that introductions can be dispensed with, and, as the guests of that day at the Astor House were mostly strangers to each other, conversation was very fitful and guarded, and any movement whatever extremely conspicuous. There were four very silent ladies on the sofa, two very silent ladies in each of the windows, silent ladies on the ottomans, silent ladies in the chairs at the corners, and one silent lady, very highly dressed, sitting on the music stool, with her back to the piano. There was here and there a gentleman in the room, weather-bound and silent; but we have only to do with one of these, and with the last-mentioned much-embellished young lady.

"Well, I can't sit on this soft chair all day, cousin Meg!" said the gentleman.

"'Sh!—call me Margaret, if you must speak so loud," said the lady. "And what would you do out of doors this rainy day? I'm sure it's very pleasant here."

"Not for me. I'd rather be thrashing in the barn. But there must be some 'rainy-weather work' in the city as well as the country. There's some fun, I know, that's kept for a wet day, as we keep corn-shelling and grinding the tools."

"Dear me!"

"Well—what now?"

"Oh, nothing!—but I *do* wish you wouldn't bring the stable with you to the Astor House."

The gentleman slightly elevated his eyebrows, took a leaf of music from the piano, and commenced diligently reading the mystic dots and lines. We have ten minutes to spare before the entrance of another person upon the scene, and we will make use of the silence to conjure up for you, in our magic mirror, the semblance of the two whose familiar dialogue we have just jotted down.

Miss Margaret Piffit was a young lady who had a large share of what the French call *la beauté du diable*—youth and freshness. (Though, why the devil should have the credit of what never belonged to him, it takes a Frenchman,

perhaps, to explain.) To look at, she was certainly a human being in very high perfection. Her cheeks were like two sound apples; her waist was as round as a stove-pipe; her shoulders had two dimples just at the back, that looked as if they defied punching to make them any deeper; her eyes looked as if they were just made, they were so bright and new; her voice sounded like "C sharp" in a new piano; and her teeth were like a fresh break in a cocoa-nut. She was inexorably, unabatedly, desperately healthy. This fact, and the difficulty of uniting all the fashions of all the magazines in one dress, were her two principal afflictions in this world of care. She had an ideal model, to which she aspired with constant longings—a model resembling in figure the high-born creatures whose never varied face is seen in all the plates of fashion, yet, if possible, paler and more disdainful. If Miss Piffit could have bent her short wrist with the curve invariably given to the well-gloved extremities of that mysterious and nameless beauty; if she could but have sat with her back to her friends, and thrown her head languishingly over her shoulder without dislocating her neck; if she could but have protruded from the flounce of her dress a foot more like a mincing little muscle-shell, and less like a jolly fat clam; in brief, if she could have drawn out her figure like the enviable joints of a spy-glass, whittled off more taperly her four extremities, sold all her uproarious and indomitable roses for a pot of carmine, and compelled the publishers of the magazines to refrain from the distracting multiplicity of their monthly fashions—with these little changes in her allotment—Miss Piffit would have realised all her maiden aspirations up to the present hour.

A glimpse will give you an idea of the gentleman in question. He was not much more than he looked to be—a compact, athletic young man of twenty-one, with clear, honest, blue eyes, brown face, (where it was not shaded by the rim of his hat,) curling brown hair, and an expression of fearless qualities, dashed just now by a tinge of rustic bashfulness. His dress was a little more expensive, and gayer than was necessary, and he wore his clothes in a way which betrayed that he would be more at home in shirt-sleeves. His hands were rough, and his attitude that of a man who was accustomed to fling himself down on the nearest bench, or swing his legs from the top rail of a fence, or the box of a wagon. We speak with caution of his rusticity, however, for he had a

printed card, "Mr. Ephraim Bracely," and he was a subscriber to the "Spirit of the Times." We shall find time to say a thing or two about him as we get on.

"Eph." Bracely and "Meg" Piffit were "engaged." With the young lady it was, as the French say, *faute de mieux*, for her *beau-idéal* (or, in plain English, her ideal-beau) was a tall, pale young gentleman, with white gloves, in a rapid consumption. She and Eph. were second cousins, however, and as she was an orphan, and had lived since childhood with his father, and, moreover, had inherited the Piffit farm, which adjoined that of the Bracelys, and, moreover, had been told to "kiss her little husband, and love him always" by the dying breath of her mother, and (moreover, third,) had been "let be" his sweetheart by the unanimous consent of the neighbourhood, why, it seemed one of those matches made in Heaven, and not intended to be travestied on earth. It was understood that they were to be married as soon as the young man's savings should enable him to pull down the old Piffit house and build a cottage, and, with a fair season, that might be done in another year. Meantime, Eph. was a loyal keeper of his troth, though, never having had the trouble to win the young lady, he was not fully aware of the necessity of courtship, whether or no; and was, besides, somewhat unsusceptible of the charms of moonlight, after a hard day's work at haying or harvesting. The neighbours thought it proof enough of his love that he never "went sparking" elsewhere, and, as he would rather talk of his gun or his fishing-rod, his horse or his crop, pigs, politics, or anything else, than of love or matrimony, his companions took his engagement with his cousin to be a subject, upon which he felt too deeply to banter, and they neither invaded his domain by attentions to his sweetheart, nor suggested thought by allusions to her. It was in the progress of this even tenor of engagement, that some law business had called old Farmer Bracely to New York, and the young couple had managed to accompany him. And, of course, nothing would do for Miss Piffit but "the Astor."

And now, perhaps, the reader is ready to be told whose carriage is at the Vesey street door, and who sends up a dripping servant to inquire for Miss Piffit.

It is allotted to the destiny of every country-girl to have one fashionable female friend in the city—somebody to correspond with, somebody to quote, somebody to write her the particulars of the last elopement, somebody to send her pat-

terns of collars, and the rise and fall of *tournures*, and such other things as are not entered into by the monthly magazine. How these apparently unlikely acquaintances are formed, is as much a mystery as the eternal youth of post-boys, and the eternal duration of donkeys. Far be it from me to pry irreverently into those pokerish corners of the machinery of the world. I go no farther than the fact, that Miss Julia Hampson was an acquaintance of Miss Piffit's.

Everybody knows "Hampson and Co."

Miss Hampson was a good deal what the Fates had tried to make her. If she had not been admirably well-dressed, it would have been by violent opposition to the united zeal and talent of dressmakers and milliners. These important vicegerents of the Hand, that reserves to itself the dressing of the butterfly and lily, make distinctions in the exercise of their vocation. Wo be to an unloveable woman, if she be not endowed with taste supreme. She may buy all the stuffs of France, and all the colours of the rainbow, but she will never get from those keen judges of fitness the loving hint, the admiring and selective persuasion with which they delight to influence the embellishment of sweetness and loveliness. They who talk of "anything's looking well on a pretty woman," have not reflected on the Lesser Providence of dressmakers and milliners. Woman is never mercenary but in monstrous exceptions, and no tradeswoman of the fashions will *sell* taste or counsel; and, in the superior style of all charming women, you see, not the influence of manners upon dress, but the affectionate tribute of these dispensers of elegance to the qualities they admire. Let him who doubts, go shopping with his dressy old aunt to-day, and to-morrow with his dear little cousin.

Miss Hampson, to whom the supplies of elegance came as naturally as bread and butter, and occasioned as little speculation as to the whence or how, was as unconsciously elegant, of course, as a well-dressed lily. She was abstractly a very beautiful girl, though in a very delicate and unobtrusive style; and by dint of absolute fitness in dressing, the merit of her beauty, by common observers at least, would be half given to her fashionable air and unexceptionable toilet. The damsel and her choice array, indeed, seemed the harmonious work of the same maker. How much was Nature's gift, and how much was bought in Broadway, was probably never duly understood by even her most discriminate admirer.

But we have kept Miss Hampson too long upon the stairs.

The two young ladies met with a kiss, in which, (to the surprise of those who had previously observed Miss Piffit) there was no smack of the latest fashion.

"My dear Julia!"

"My dear Margerine!" (This was a Romantic variation of Meg's, which she had forced upon her intimate friends at the point of the bayonet.)

Eph. twitched, remindingly, the *jupone* of his cousin, and she introduced him with the formula which she had found in one of Miss Austin's novels.

"Oh, but there was a mock respectfulness in that deep courtesy," thought Eph. (and so there was—for Miss Hampson took an irresistible cue from the inflated ceremoniousness of the introduction).

Eph. made a bow as cold and stiff as a frozen horse-blanket. And if he could have commanded the blood in his face, it would have been as dignified and resentful as the eloquence of Red Jacket—but that rustic blush, up to his hair, was like a mask dropped over his features.

"A bashful country-boy," thought Miss Hampson, as she looked compassionately upon his red-hot forehead, and forthwith dismissed him entirely from her thoughts.

With a consciousness that he had better leave the room, and walk off his mortification under an umbrella, Eph. took his seat, and silently listened to the conversation of the young ladies. Miss Hampson had come to pass the morning with her friend, and she took off her bonnet, and showered down upon her dazzling neck, a profusion of the most adorable brown ringlets. Spite of his angry humiliation, the young farmer felt a thrill run through his veins as the heavy curls fell indolently about her shoulders. He had never before looked upon a woman with emotion. He hated her—oh, yes! for she had given him a look that could never be forgiven—but for *somebody*, she must be the angel of the world. Eph. would have given all his sheep and horses, cows, crops, and haystacks, to have seen the man she would fancy to be her equal. He could not give even a guess at the height of that conscious superiority from which she individually looked down upon him; but it would have satisfied a thirst which almost made him scream, to measure himself by a man with whom *she* could be familiar. Where was his inferiority? What was it? Why had he been blind to it till now? Was there no surgeon's

knife, no caustic, that could carve out, or cut away, burn or scarify, the vulgarities she looked upon so contemptuously? But the devil take her superciliousness, nevertheless!

It was a bitter morning to Eph. Bracely, but still it went like a dream. The hotel parlour was no longer a stupid place. His cousin Meg had gained a consequence in his eyes, for she was the object of caress from this superior creature—she was the link which kept her within his observation. He was too full of other feelings just now, to do more than acknowledge the superiority of this girl to his cousin. He *felt* it in his after thoughts, and his destiny then, for the first time, seemed crossed and inadequate to his wishes.

* * * * *

(We hereby draw upon your imagination for six months, courteous reader. Please allow the "teller" to show you into the middle of the following July.)

Bracely farm, ten o'clock of a glorious summer morning; Miss Piffit extended upon a sofa in despair. But let us go back a little.

A week before, a letter had been received from Miss Hampson, who, to the delight and surprise of her friend Margerine, had taken the whim to pass a month with her. She was at Rockaway, and was sick and tired of waltzing and the sea. Had Farmer Bracely a spare corner for a poor girl?

But Miss Piffit's "sober second thought" was utter consternation. How to lodge fitly, the elegant Julia Hampson? No French bed in the house, no boudoir, no ottomans, no pastilles, no baths, no Psyche to dress by! What vulgar wretches they would seem to her! What insupportable horror she would feel at the dreadful inelegance of the farm! Meg was pale with terror and dismay as she went into the details of anticipation.

Something must be done, however. A sleepless night of reflection and contrivance sufficed to give some shape to the capabilities of the case, and, by daylight the next morning, the whole house was in commotion. Meg had, fortunately, a large bump of constructiveness, very much enlarged by her habitual dilemmas of toilette. A boudoir must be constructed, Farmer Bracely slept in the dried-apple room, on the lower floor, and he was no sooner out of his bed, than his bag and baggage were tumbled up stairs, his gun and Sunday whip were taken down from their nails, the floor scoured, and the ceiling white-washed. Eph. was, by this time, re-

turned from the village with all the chintz that could be bought, and a paper of tacks, and some new straw carpeting; and, by ten o'clock that night, the four walls of the apartment were covered with the gaily-flowered material, the carpet was nailed down, and old Farmer Bracely thought it a mighty nice, cool-looking place. Eph. was a bit of a carpenter, and he soon knocked together some boxes, which, when covered with chintz, and stuffed with wool, looked very like ottomans; and, with a handsome cloth on the round table, geraniums in the windows, and a chintz curtain to subdue the light, it was not far from a very charming boudoir, and Meg began to breathe more freely.

But Eph. had heard this news with the blood hot in his temples. Was that proud woman coming, again to look at him with contempt, and here, too, where the rusticity, which he presumed to be the object of her scorn, would be a thousand times more flagrant and visible? And yet, with the entreaty on his lip, that his cousin would refuse to receive her, his heart had checked the utterance, for an irresistible desire sprung suddenly within him to see her, even at the bitter cost of tenfold his former mortification.

Yet, as the preparations for receiving Miss Hampson went on, other thoughts took possession of his mind. Eph. was not a man, indeed, to come off second best, in the long pull of wrestling with a weakness. His pride began to show its colours. He remembered his independence as a farmer, dependant on no man; and a little comparison between his pursuits, and life such as he knew it to be, in a city, soon put him, in his own consciousness, at least, on a par with Miss Hampson's connexions. This point once attained, Eph. cleared his brow, and went whistling about the farm as usual; receiving without reply, however, a suggestion of his cousin Meg's, that he had better burn his old straw hat, for, in a fit of absence, he *might possibly* put it on while Miss Hampson was there.

Well, it was ten o'clock on the morning after Miss Hampson's arrival at Bracely Farm, and, as we said before, Miss Piffit was in despair. Presuming that her friend would be fatigued with her journey, she had determined not to wake her, but to order breakfast in the boudoir at eleven. Farmer Bracely and Eph. must have their breakfast at seven, however, and what was the dismay of Meg, who was pouring out their coffee as usual, to see the elegant Julia rush into the first

kitchen, curtsy very sweetly to the old man, pull up a chair to the table, apologise for being late, and end this extraordinary scene, by producing two newly-hatched chickens from her bosom! She had been up since sunrise, and out at the barn, down by the river, and up in the haymow, and was perfectly enchanted with everything, especially the dear little pigs and chickens!

"A very sweet young lady!" thought old Farmer Bracely.

"Very well; but hang your condescension!" thought Eph., distrustfully.

"Mercy on me! to like pigs and chickens!" mentally ejaculated the disturbed and bewildered Miss Piffrit.

But with her two chicks pressed to her breast with one hand, Miss Hampson managed her coffee and bread and butter with the other, and chattered away like a child let out of school. The air was so delicious, and the hay smelt so sweet, and the trees in the meadow were so beautiful, and there were no stiff sidewalks, and no brick houses, and no iron railings, and so many dear speckled hens, and funny little chickens, and kind-looking old cows, and colts, and calves, and ducks, and turkeys; it was delicious; it was enchanting; it was worth a thousand Saratogas and Rockaways. How any body could prefer the city to the country, was, to Miss Hampson, matter of incredulous wonder.

"Will you come into the boudoir?" asked Miss Piffrit with a languishing air, as her friend Julia rose from breakfast.

"Boudoir!" exclaimed the city damsel, to the infinite delight of old Bracely, "no dear! I'd rather go out to the barn! Are you going anywhere with the oxen to-day, sir?" she added, going up to the grey-headed farmer, caressingly, "I should so like to ride in that great cart!"

Eph. was a little suspicious of all this unexpected agreeableness, but he was naturally too courteous, not to give way to a lady's whims. He put on his old straw hat, and tied his handkerchief over his shoulder, (not to imitate the broad riband of a royal order, but to wipe the sweat off handily while mowing,) and, offering Miss Hampson a rake which stood outside the door, he begged her to be ready when he came by with the team. He and his father were bound to the far meadow, where they were cutting hay, and would like her assistance in raking.

It was a "specimen" morning, as the magazines say, for the air was temperate, and the whole country was laden with the smell of the new hay, which somehow or other, as everybody knows, never hinders or overpowers the perfume of the flowers. Oh, that winding green lane between the bushes was like an avenue to paradise! The old cart jolted along through the ruts, and Miss Hampson, standing up, and holding on to old Farmer Bracely, watched the great oxen crowding their sides together, and looked off over the fields, and exclaimed, as she saw glimpses of the river between the trees, and seemed veritably, and unaffectedly enchanted. The old farmer, at least, had no doubt of her sincerity, and he watched her, and listened to her, with a broad, honest smile of admiration on his weather-browned countenance.

The oxen were turned up to the fence, while the dew dried off the hay, and Eph. and his father turned to mowing, leaving Miss Hampson to ramble about over the meadow, and gather flowers by the river side. In the course of an hour, they began to rake up, and she came to offer her promised assistance, and stoutly followed Eph. up and down several of the long swaths, till her face glowed under her sun-bonnet as it never had glowed with waltzing. Heated and tired at last, she made herself a seat, with the new hay, under a large elm, and, with her back to the tree, watched the labours of her companions.

Eph. was a well-built and manly figure, and all he did in the way of his vocation, he did with a fine display of muscular power, and (a sculptor would have thought), no little grace. Julia watched him, as he stepped along after his rake on the elastic sward, and she thought, for the first time, what a very handsome man was young Bracely, and how much more finely a man looked when raking hay, than a dandy when waltzing. And, for an hour, she sat watching his motion, admiring the strength with which he pitched up the hay, and the grace and ease of all his movements and postures; and after a while, she began to feel drowsy with fatigue, and pulling up the hay into a fragrant pillow, she lay down, and fell fast asleep.

It was now the middle of the forenoon, and the old farmer, who, of late years, had fallen into the habit of taking a short nap before dinner, came to the big elm to pick up his waistcoat and go home. As he approached the tree, he stopped, and beckoned to his son.

Eph. came up and stood at a little distance, looking at the lovely picture before him. With one delicate hand under her cheek, and a smile of angelic content and enjoyment on her finely cut lips, Julia Hampson slept soundly in the shade. One small foot escaped from her dress, and one shoulder of faultless polish and whiteness showed between her kerchief and her sleeve. Her slight waist bent to the swell of the hay, throwing her delicate and well-moulded bust into high relief: and all over her neck, and in large clusters on the tumbled hay, lay those glossy brown ringlets, admirably beautiful and luxuriant.

And as Eph. looked on that dangerous picture of loveliness, the passion, already lying *perdu* in his bosom, sprung to the throne of heart and reason.

(We have not room to do more than hint at the consequences of this visit of Miss Hampson to the country. It would require the third volume of a novel to describe all the emotions of that month at Bracely farm, and bring the reader, point by point, gingerly and softly, to the close. We must touch here and there a point only, giving the reader's imagination some gleaning to do, after we have been over the ground.)

Eph. Bracely's awakened pride served him the good turn of making him appear simply in his natural character, during the whole of Miss Hampson's visit. By the old man's advice, however, he devoted himself to the amusement of the ladies after the haying was over; and what with fishing, and riding, and scenery-hunting in the neighbourhood, the young people were together from morning till night. Miss Pifflet came down, unwillingly, to plain Meg, in her attendance on her friend in her rustic occupations, and Miss Hampson saw as little as possible of the inside of the *boudoir*. The barn, and the troops of chickens, and all the out-door belongings to the farm, interested her daily, and with no diminution of her zeal. She seemed, indeed, to have found her natural sphere in the simple and affectionate life which her friend Margerine held in such superfine contempt; and Eph., who was the natural mate to such a spirit, and himself, in his own home, most unconsciously worthy of love and admiration, gave himself up irresistibly to his new passion.

And this new passion became apparent, at last, to the incredulous eyes of his cousin. And that it was timidly, but fondly, returned by her elegant and high-bred friend, was

also very apparent to Miss Piffit. And, after a few jealous struggles, and a night or two of weeping, she gave up to it tranquilly—for, a city life, and a city husband, truth to say, had long been her secret longing and secret hope, and she never had fairly looked in the face, a burial in the country with the “pigs and chickens.”

She is not married yet, Meg Piffit—but the rich merchant, Mr. Hampson, wrecked completely with the disastrous times, has found a kindly and pleasant asylum for his old age, with his daughter, Mrs. Bracely. And a better or lovelier farmer’s wife than Julia, or a happier farmer than Eph., can scarce be found in the valley of the Susquehannah.

THOSE UNGRATEFUL BLIDGIMSES.

“For, look you, he hath as many friends as enemies; which friends, sir—as it were,—durst not—look you, sir,—show themselves—as we term it—his friends, while he’s in directitude.”—CORIOLANUS.

Hermione.—“Our praises are our wages.”—WINTER’S TALE.

F——, the portrait painter, was a considerable ally of mine at one time. His success in his art brought him into contact with many people, and he made friends as a fastidious lady buys shoes—trying on a great many that were destined to be thrown aside. It was the prompting, no doubt, of a generous quality—that of believing all people perfect till he discovered their faults—but, as he cut loose without ceremony from those whose faults were not to his mind, and, as ill-fitting people are not as patient of rejection as ill-fitting shoes, the quality did not pass for its full value, and his abusers were “thick as leaves in Vallombrosa.” The friends who “wore his bleeding roses,” however, (and of these he had his share,) fought his battles quite at their own charge. What with plenty of pride, and as plentiful a lack of approbateness, F—— took abuse as a duck’s back takes rain—bnoyant in the shower, as in the sunshine.

“Well, F——,” I said, as I occupied his big chair one morning, while he was at work, “there was great skirmishing about you, last night at the tea party!”

“No!—really? Who was the enemy?”

“Two ladies, who said they travelled with you through Italy, and knew all about you—the Blidgimses.”

"Oh, the dear old Blidgimses—Crinny and Ninny—the ungrateful monsters! Did I ever tell you of my nursing those two old girls through the cholera?"

"No. But before you go off with a long story, tell me how you can stand such abominable backbiting? It isn't once in a way, merely! you are their whole stock-in-trade, and they vilify you in every house they set foot in. The mildest part of it is criminal slander, my good fellow! Why not do the world a service, and show that slander is actionable, though it is committed in good society?"

"Pshaw! What does it amount to?"

"The eagle suffers little birds to sing,

And is not careful what they mean thereby;"

and, in this particular instance, the jury would probably give the damages the other way, for if they hammer at me till doomsday, I have had my fun out of them, my *quid pro quo*!"

"Well, preface your story by telling me where you met them. I never knew by what perverse thread you were drawn together."

"A thread that might have drawn me into much more desperate extremity — a letter from the most loveable of women charging me to become the trusty squire of these errant damsels wherever I should encounter them. I was then studying in Italy. They came to Florence, where I chanced to be, and were handed over to me without dog, cat, or waiting-maid, by a man who seemed ominously glad to be rid of them. As it was the ruralizing season, and all the world was flocking to the baths of Lucca, close by, they went there till I could get ready to undertake them, which I did with the devotion of a *courier* in a new place, one fig-desiring evening of June."

"Was there a delivery of the great seal?" I asked, rather amused at F——'s circumstantial mention of his *introtitus* to office.

"Something very like it, indeed. I had not fairly got the blood out of my face after making my salaam, when Miss Crinny Blidgims fished up from some deep place she had about her, a memorandum book with a well-thumbed brown paper cover, and, gliding across the room, placed it in my hands as people on the stage present pocket-books, with a sort of dust-flapping parabola. Now, if I have any particular antipathy, it is to the smell of old flannel, and, as this equivocal-looking object descended before my nose—faith!—but I took it. It

was the account-book of the eatables and drinkables furnished to the ladies in their travels, the prices of eggs, bread, figs, *et cetera*, and I was to begin my duties by having up the head waiter of the lodging-house, and holding inquisition on his charges. The Blidgimses spoke no Italian, and no servant in the house spoke English, and they were bursting for a translator to tell him that the eggs were overcharged, and that he must deduct threepence a day for wine, for they never touched it!"

"What do the ladies wish?" inquired the dumb-founded waiter, in civil Tuscan.

"What does he say? what does he say?" cried Miss Corinna, in resounding nasal.

"Tell the impudent fellow what eggs are in Dutchess county!" peppered out Miss Katrina, very sharply.

"Of course, I translated with a discretion. There was rather an incongruity between the looks of the damsels and what they were to be represented as saying, Katrina Blidgims living altogether in a blue opera-hat with a white feather."

I interrupted F—— to say that the blue hat was immortal, for it was worn at the tea-party of the night before.

"I had enough of the blue hat and its handbox before we parted. It was the one lifetime extravagance of the old maid, perpetrated in Paris, and as it covered the back seam of a wig (a subsequent discovery of mine), she was never without it, except when bonneted to go out. She came to breakfast in it, mended her stockings in it, went to parties in it. I fancy it took some trouble to adjust it to the wig, and she devoted to it the usual dressing hours of morning and dinner; for in private, she wore a handkerchief over it, pinned under her chin, which had only to be whipped off when company was announced, and this, perhaps, is one of the secrets of its immaculate yet threadbare preservation. She called it her *abbo*!"

"Her what?"

"You have heard of the famous Herbault, the man-milliner of Paris? The bonnet was his production, and called after him with great propriety. In Italy, where people dress according to their condition in life, this perpetual *abbo* was something *à la Princesse*, and hence my embarrassment in explaining to Jacomo, the waiter, that Signorina Katrina's high summons, concerned only an overcharge of a penny in the eggs!"

"And what said Jacomo?"

"Jacomo was incapable of an incivility, and begged pardon before stating, that the usual practice of the house was to charge half a dollar a day for board and lodging, including a private parlour and bedroom, three meals, and a bottle of wine. The ladies, however, had applied through an English gentleman (who chanced to call on them, and who spoke Italian), to have reductions made, on their dispensing with two dishes of meat out of three, drinking no wine, and wanting no nuts and raisins. Their main extravagance was in eggs, which they ate several times a day between meals, and wished to have cooked and served up at the price per dozen in the market. On this they had held conclave below stairs, and the result had not been communicated, because there was no common language; but Jacomo wished, through me, respectfully to represent that the reductions from the half-dollar a day should be made as requested, but that the eggs could not be bought, cooked, and served up (with salt and bread and a clean napkin), for *just* their price in the market. And on this point the ladies were obstinate. And to settle this difficulty between the high contracting parties, cost an argument of a couple of hours, my first performance as translator in the service of the Blidgimses. Thenceforward, I was as necessary to Crinny and Ninny (these were their familiar diminutives for Corinna and Katrina)—as necessary to Crinny as the gift of speech, and to Ninny as the wig and *abbo* put together. Obedient to the mandate of the fair hand which had consigned me to them, I gave myself up to their service, even keeping in my pocket their frowsy grocery book, though not without some private outlay in burnt vinegar. What penance a man will undergo for a pretty woman, who cares nothing about him!"

"But what could have started such a helpless pair of old quizzes upon their travels?"

"I wondered myself until I knew them better. Crinny Blidgims had a tongue of the liveliness of an eel's tail. It would have wagged after she was skinned and roasted. She had, beside, a kind of pinchbeck smartness, and these two gifts, and perhaps the name of Corinna, had inspired her with the idea that she was an *improvisatrice*. So, how could she die without going to Italy?"

"And Ninny went for company?"

"Oh, Miss Ninny Blidgims had a passion too! She had

come out to see Paris. She had heard that, in Paris, people could renew their youth, and she thought she had done it, with her *abbo*. She thought, too, that she must have manners to correspond. So, while travelling in her old bonnet, she blurted out her bad grammar as she had done for fifty years, but in her blue hat, she simpered and frisked to the best of her recollection. Silly as that old girl was, however, she had the most pellucid set of ideas on the prices of things to eat. There was no humbugging her on that subject, even in a foreign language. She filled her pockets with apples, usually in our walks; and the translating between her and a street huckster, she in her *abbo* and the apple-woman in Italian rags, was vexatious to endure, but very funny to remember. I have thought of painting it, but, to understand the picture, the spectator must make the acquaintance of Miss Fanny Blidgims—rather a pill for a connoisseur! But, by this time, you are ready to *approfond*, as the French aptly say, the depths of my subsequent distresses.

THE STORY.

“I had been about a month at Lucca, when it was suddenly proposed by Crinny that we should take a vetturino together, and go to Venice. Ninny and she had come down to dinner, with a sudden disgust for the baths—owing, perhaps, to the distinction they had received as the only strangers in the place who were *not* invited to the ball of a certain prince, our next-door neighbour. The Blidgimses and their economies, in fact, had become the joke of the season, and, as the interpreter in the egg-trades, I was mixed up in the omelette, and as glad to escape from my notoriety as they. So I set about looking up the conveyance with some alacrity.

“By the map, it was evidently a great saving of distance to cross the mountains to Modena, and, of course, a great saving of expense, as vetturinos are paid by the mile; but the guide-books stated that the road was rough, and the inns abominable, and recommended to all who cared for comfort, to make a circumbendibus by the way of Florence and Bologna. Ninny declared she could live on bread and apples, however, and Crinny delighted in mountain air—in short, economy carried it, and after three days’ chaffering with the owner of a rattle-trap vettura, we set off up the banks of the Lima—without the blessing of Giacomo, the head waiter!

“We soon left the bright little river, and struck into the mountains, and, as the carriage crept on very slowly, I re-

lieved the horses of my weight, and walked on. The ladies did the same thing whenever they came in sight of an orchard, and, for the first day, Ninny munched the unripe apples and seemed getting along very comfortably. The first night's lodging was execrable, but as the driver assured us that it was the best on the route, we saved our tempers for the worst, and, the next day, began to penetrate a country that looked deserted of man, and curst with uninhabitable sterility. Its effects on my spirits, as I walked on alone, was as depressing as the news of some trying misfortune, and I was giving it credit for one redeeming quality—that of an opiate to a tongue like Crinny Blidgins's—when both the ladies began to show symptoms of illness. It was not long after noon, and we were in the midst of a waste upland, the road bending over the horizon before and behind us, and neither shed nor shelter, bush, wall, or tree, within reach of the eye. The only habitation we had seen since morning was a wretched hovel, where the horses were fed at noon, and the albergo, where we should pass the night, was distant several hours—a long up-hill stretch, on which the pace of the horses could not possibly be mended. The ladies were bent double in the carriage, and said they could not possibly go on. Going back was out of the question. The readiest service I could proffer was to leave them and hurry on to the inn to prepare for their reception.

“Fortunately our team was unicorn-rigged—one horse in advance of a pair. I took off the leader, and galloped away.

“Well, the cholera was still lingering in Italy, and stomachs must be made cholera-proof to stand a perpetual diet of green apples, even with no epidemic in the air. So I had a very clear idea of the remedies that would be required on their arrival.

“At a hand-gallop, I reached the albergo in a couple of hours. It was a large stone barrack, intended, no doubt, as was the road we had travelled, for military uses. A thick stone wall surrounded it, and it stood in the midst, in a pool of mud. From the last eminence before arriving, not another object could be descried within a horizon of twenty miles' diameter, and a whitish soil of baked clay, browned here and there by a bit of scanty herbage, was foreground, and middle, and background to the pleasant picture. The site of the barrack had, probably, been determined by the only spring within many miles, and by the dryness without, and the mud within the walls, it was contrived for a monopoly by the besieged.

"I cantered in at the unhinged gate, and roared out 'casa!' 'cameriere!' 'botega!' till I was frightened at my own voice.

"No answer. I threw my bridle over a projection of the stone steps, and mounted, from an empty stable which occupied the ground floor (Italian fashion), to the second story, which seemed equally uninhabited. Here were tables, however, and wooden settees, and dirty platters—the first signs of life. On the hearth was an iron pot and a pair of tongs, and, with these two musical instruments I played a tune which I was sure would find ears, if ears there were on the premises. And presently a heavy foot was heard on the stair above, and, with a sonorous yawn descended mine host—dirty and stolid—a goodly pattern of the 'fat weed on Lethe's wharf,' as you would meet in a century. He had been taking his siesta, and his wife had had a *colpo di sole*, and was confined helplessly to her bed. The man John was out tending sheep, and he, the host, was, vicariously, cook, waiter, and chambermaid. What might be the pleasure of *il signore*?

"My pleasure was, first to see the fire kindled, and the pot put over, and then to fall into a brown study,

"Two fine ladies with the cholera—two days' journey from a physician—a fat old Italian landlord for nurse and sole counsellor—nobody who could understand a word they uttered, except myself, and not a drug nor a ministering petticoat within available limits! Then the doors of the chambers were without latches or hinges, and the little bed in each great room was the one article of furniture, and the house was so still in the midst of that great waste, that all sounds and movements whatever, must be of common cognisance! Should I be discharging my duty to ladies under my care, to leave them to this dirty old man? Should I offer my own attendance as constant nurse, and would the service be accepted? How, in the name of Robinson Crusoe, were these delicate damsels to be 'done for?'

"As a matter of economy in dominos, as well as to have something Italian to bring home, I had bought at Naples the costume of a sister of charity, and in it I had done all my masquerading for three carnivals. It was among my baggage, and it occurred to me whether I had not better take the landlord into my confidence, and bribe him to wait upon the ladies disguised in coif and petticoat. No—for he had a mustache, and spoke nothing but Italian. Should I do it myself?

"I paced up and down the stone floor in an agony of dilemma.

In the course of half an hour, I had made up my mind. I called to Boniface, who was watching the boiling pot, and made a clean breast to him of my impending distresses, aiding his comprehension by such eye-water as landlords require. He readily undertook the necessary lies, brought out his store of brandy, added a second bed to one of the apartments, and promised faithfully to bear my sex in mind, and treat me with the reverence due to my cross and rosary. I then tore out a leaf of the grocery book, and wrote with my pencil a note to this effect, to be delivered to the ladies on their arrival:—

“ ‘DEAR MISS BLIDGIMS: Feeling quite indisposed myself, and being firmly persuaded that we are three cases of cholera, I have taken advantage of a return calesino, to hurry on to Modena for medical advice. The vehicle I take brought hither a sister of charity, who assures me she will wait on you, even in the most malignant stage of your disease. She is collecting funds for a hospital, and will receive compensation for her services in the form of a donation to this object. I shall send you a physician by express from Modena, where it is still possible we may meet. With prayers, &c. &c,

“ ‘Yours very devotedly,

“ ‘F.

“ ‘P. S. Sister Benedetta understands French when spoken, though she speaks only Italian.’

“ The delivery of this was subject, of course, to the condition of the ladies when they should arrive, though I had a presentiment they were in for a serious business.

“ And, true to my boding, they did arrive, exceedingly ill. An hour earlier than I had looked for him, the vetturino came up with foaming horses at a tugging trot, frightened half out of his senses. The ladies were dying, he swore by all the saints, before he dismounted. He tore open the carriage door, shouted for *il signore* and the landlord, and had carried both the groaning girls up stairs in his arms, before fat Boniface, who had been killing a sheep in the stable, could wash his hands and come out to him. To his violent indignation, the landlord's first care was to unstrap the baggage and take off my portmanteau, condescending to give him neither why nor wherefore, and, as it mounted the stairs on the broad shoulders of my faithful ally, it was followed by a string of oaths, such as can rattle off from nothing but the voluble tongue of an Italian.

“ I immediately despatched the note by the host, requesting him to come back and ‘do my dress,’ and, in half an hour,

sister Benedetta's troublesome toilet was achieved, and my old Abigail walked around me, rubbing his hands, and swore I was a '*meraviglia di bellezza*.' The lower part of my face was covered by the linen coif, and the forehead was almost completely concealed in the plain put-away of a 'false front;' and, unless the Blidgimses had reconnoitred my nose and eyes very carefully, I was sure of my disguise. The improvements in my figure were, unluckily, fixtures in the dress, for it was very hot; but, by the landlord's account, they were very becoming. Do you believe the old dog tried to kiss me?"

"The groans of Ninny, meantime, resounded through the house, for, as I expected, she had the worst of it. Her exclamations of pain were broken up, I could also hear, by sentences in a sort of spiteful monotone, answered in regular 'humphs!' by Crinny—Crinny never talking except to astonish, and being as habitually crisp to her half-witted sister, as she was fluent to those who were capable of surprise. Fearing that some disapprobation of myself might find its way to Ninny's lips, and for several other reasons which occurred to me, I thought it best to give the ladies another half hour to themselves; and, by way of testing my *incognito*, bustled about in the presence of the vetturino, warming oil and mixing brandies-and-water, and getting used to the suffocation of my petticoats—for you have no idea how intolerably hot they are, with trowsers under.

"Quite assured, at last, I knocked at the door.

"'That's his nun!' said Ninny, after listening an instant.

"'Come in!—that is to say, *entrez!*' feebly murmured Crinny.

"They were both in bed, rolled up like pocket-handkerchiefs; but Ninny had found strength to bandbox her wig and abbo, and array herself in a nightcap with an exceedingly broad frill. But I must not trench upon the 'secrets of the prison-house.' You are a bachelor, and the Blidgimses are still in a 'world of hope.'

"I walked in, and leaned over each of them, and whispered a *benedicite*, felt their pulses, and made signs that I understood their complaints, and they need not trouble themselves to explain; and forthwith I commenced operations by giving them their grog (which they swallowed without making faces, by-the-bye), and, as they relaxed their postures a little, I got one foot at a time hung over to me from the side of the bed into the pail of hot water, and set them to rubbing themselves with the warm oil, while I vigorously bathed their extremi-

ties. Crinny, as I very well knew, had but five-and twenty words of French, just sufficient to hint at her wants, and Ninny spoke only such English as Heaven pleased, so I played the ministering angel in safe silence—listening to my praises, however, for I handled Ninny's irregular *doigts du pied* with a tenderness that pleased her.

"Well—you know what the cholera is. I knew that, at the Hotel Dieu of Paris, women who had not been intemperate were oftenest cured by whiskey punches, and, as brandy toddies were the nearest approach of which the resources of the place admitted, I plied my patients with brandy toddy. In the weak state of their stomachs, it produced, of course, a delirious intoxication, and, as I began very early in the morning, there were no lucid intervals in which my incognito might be endangered. My ministrations were, consequently, very much facilitated, and, after the second day (when I really thought the poor girls would die), we fell into a very regular course of hospital life, and, for one, I found it very entertaining. Quite impressed with the idea that sister Bellidettor (as Ninny called me) understood not a word of English, they discoursed to please themselves; and I was obliged to get a book, to excuse, even to their tipsy comprehension, my outbreaks of laughter. Crinny spouted poetry and sobbed about Washington Irving, who, she thought, *should* have been her lover; and Ninny sat up in bed, and, with a small glass she had in the back of her hair-brush, tried on her *abbe* at every possible angle, always ending by making signs to sister Bellidettor to come and comb her hair! There was a long, slender moustache, remaining on the back of the bald crown, and, after putting this into my hand, with the hair-brush, she sat with a smile of delight, till she found my brushing did not come round to the front.

"'Why don't you brush this lock?' she cried, 'this—and this—and this!' making passes from her shining skull down to her waist, as if, in every one, she had a handful of hair! And so, for an hour together, I threaded these imaginary locks, beginning where they were rooted 'long time ago,' and passing the brush off to the length of my arm—the cranium, when I had done, looking like a balloon of shot silk, its smooth surface was so purpled with the friction of the bristles. Poor Ninny! She has great temptation to tipple, I think—that is, 'if Macassar won't bring back the lost *chevelure*!'

"About the fifth day, the ladies began to show signs of

convalescence, and it became necessary to reduce their potations. Of course, they grew less entertaining, and I was obliged to be much more on my guard. Crinny fell from her inspiration, and Ninny from her complacency, and they came down to their previous condition of damaged spinsters, prim and peevish. 'Needs must' that I should 'play out the play,' however, and I abated none of my *petits soins* for their comfort, laying out very large anticipations of their grateful acknowledgments for my dramatic chivalry, devotion, and delicacy!"

"Well—they *are* ungrateful!" said I, interrupting F—— for the first time in his story.

"Now, are not they? They should at least, since they deny me my honours, pay me for my services as maid-of-all-work, nurse, hair-dresser, and apothecary! Well, if I hear of their abusing me again, I'll send in my bills. Wouldn't you? But to wind up this long story.

"I thought that perhaps there might be some little circumstances, connected with my attentions, which would look best at a distance, and that it would be more delicate to go on and take leave at Modena as sister Benedetta, and rejoin them the next morning in hose and doublet as before—reserving to some future period the clearing up of my apparently recreant desertion. On the seventh morning, therefore, I instructed old Giuseppe, the landlord, to send in his bill to the ladies while I was dressing, and give notice to the vetturino that he was to take the holy sister to Modena in the place of *il signore*, who had gone on before.

"Crinny and Ninny were their own reciprocal dressing-maids, but Crinny's fingers had weakened by sickness much more than her sister's waist had diminished, and, in the midst of shaving, in my own room, I was called to 'finish doing' Ninny, who backed up to me with her mouth full of pins, and the breath, for the time being, quite expelled from her body. As I was straining, very red in the face, at the critical hook, Giuseppe knocked at the door, with the bill, and the lack of an interpreter to dispute the charges, brought up the memory of the supposed 'absquatulator' with no very grateful odour. Before I could finish Miss Ninny, and get out of the room, I heard myself charged with more abominations, mental and personal, than the monster that would have made the fortune of Trinculo. Crinny counted down half the money, and attempted, by very expressive signs, to impress upon Giuseppe that it was enough; but the oily palm of the

old publican was patiently held out for more, and she at last paid the full demand, fairly crying with vexation.

"Quite sick of the new and divers functions to which I had been serving an apprenticeship in my black petticoat, I took my place in the *vettura*, and dropped veil, to be sulky in one lump as far as Modena. I would willingly have stopped my ears, but, after wearing out their indignation at the unabated charges of old Giuseppe, the ladies took up the subject of the expected donation to the charity-fund of sister Benedetta, and their expedients, to get rid of it, occupied (very amusingly to me) the greater part of a day's travel. They made up their minds at last, that half a dollar would be as much as I could expect for my week's attendance, and Crinny requested that she should not be interrupted while she thought out the French for saying as much, when we should come to the parting.

I was sitting quietly in the corner of the *vettura* the next day, felicitating myself on the success of my masquerade, when we suddenly came to a halt at the gate of Modena, and the *doganiere* put his moustache in at the window, with '*Passaporti, signori!*'

"Murder! thought I—here's a difficulty I never provided for!

"The ladies handed out their papers, and I thrust my hand through the slit in the side of my dress and pulled mine from my pocket. As of course you know, it is the business of this gatekeeper to compare every traveller with the description given of him in his passport. He read those of the Blid-gimses and looked at them—all right. I sat still while he opened mine, thinking it possible he might not care to read the description of a sister of charity. But to my dismay he did—and opened his eyes, and looked again into the carriage.

"*'Aspetta, caro!'* said I, for I saw it was of no use. I gathered up my bombazine and stepped out into the road. There were a dozen soldiers, and two or three loungers sitting on a long bench in the shade of the gateway. The officer read through the description once more, and then turned to me with the look of a functionary who had detected a culprit. I began to pull up my petticoat. The soldiers took their pipes out of their mouths, and uttered the Italian '*keck*' of surprise. When I had got as far as the knee, however, I came to the rolled-up trowsers, and the officer joined in the sudden uproar of laughter. I pulled my black petticoat over my head, and stood in my waistcoat and shirt-sleeves, and

bowed to the merry official. The Blidgimses, to my surprise, uttered no exclamation, but I had forgotten my coif. When that was unpinning, and my whiskers came to light, their screams became alarming. The vetturino ran for water, the soldiers started to their feet, and in the midst of the excitement, I ordered down my baggage, and resumed my coat and cap, and repacked, under lock and key, the sister Benedetta. And not quite ready to encounter the Blidgimses, I walked on to the hotel, and left the vetturino to bring on the ladies at his leisure.

"Of course I had no control over accidents, and this exposure was unlucky; but, if I had had time to let myself down softly on the subject, don't you see it would have been quite a different sort of an affair? I parted company from the old girls at Modena, however, and they were obliged to hire a man-servant who spoke English and Italian, and probably the expense of that was added to my iniquities. Anyhow, abusing me this way is very ungrateful of these Blidgimses. Now, isn't it?"

BELLES OF NEW YORK.

MRS. VERE.

A CHILD educated solely for prosperity, was Violet Fanning. She was literally a belle at twelve years of age, for so accomplished was the beautiful child as a dancer, and so well-bred and self-collected in her manners and replies, that, while passing a gay month with her mother at Saratoga, the beaux approached her with deference due to a lady, danced with her, and addressed to her, conversation as well suited to the age of eighteen. Her mother being a woman of remarkable elegance and beauty, her father having always lived like a gentleman of fortune, and the family, in all their connexions, being understood to be ambitious and worldly, there was little chance for the fair Violet to escape what is commonly considered a "good match." She grew up to the marriageable age in singular perfection of style, personal development, and mental *aplomb*. The admiration she excited for these qualities was the greater, because her spirits were naturally high, and her inevitable style of manner was the brilliant and

fearless—the most difficult of all manners to sustain proportionately, and with invariable triumph and grace.

At eighteen, Miss Fanning, though not living in the city, was one of the best known, and most admired belles of the time. To a connoisseur of symmetry, her movement and peculiar grace, even as she walked in the street, were a study. Of Arabian slighthness and litheness, her figure still seemed filled out to its most absolute proportion, and, with the clearness of her hazel eye, the dazzling whiteness of teeth without a fault, colour beautifully distributed in her face, and features almost minutely regular, she seemed one of those phenomena of physical perfection, of which sculptors deny the existence. A fault-finder might have found the coral thread of the lips too slight, and the nose too thin, in its high-bred proportion—these being indications of a character in which sentiment and tenderness are not prevailing qualities—but, perhaps, here, after all, lay the secret of a propriety and self-control never ostensibly cared for, and yet never, by any possibility, put in peril.

Cordial without hesitation, joyous always, confident as a princess, frank and simple, Miss Fanning charmed all—but apparently charmed all alike. Of any leaning to a flirtation, no human heart ever could suppose her capable. The finding of a mate for herself never seemed to have entered her mind—neither that care, nor any other, apparently admissible through the door of a mind, guarded by the merest joyousness of a complete existence. Of the approaches which instinct makes every woman understand—the approaches of those who, by the silent language of magnetism, inquire whether they could be loved—she gave no sign by a manner more thoughtful, and she was too high-minded, of course, to betray any such secret which she might have fathomed; but many such approaches she doubtless had. The world, not at all prepared by any previous indication, was simply surprised of course, one fine day, to hear of Miss Fanning's engagement to Mr. Vere. It was a match of the highest possible promise—the gentleman, a son of one of the best and wealthiest families, and the affianced, an only daughter, and probably a considerable heiress. The wedding soon followed, and was unusually brilliant. The prophecies were without a shadow.

Ten years have passed, and death and change have braided their dark threads in the life-woof of Mrs. Vere, as in those of women less fair. The fortunes, of both her husband's

family and her own, some five years ago, lessened, without wrecking altogether, and Mr. Vere, as hopes from without gave way, turned, with American facility, to resources within; and, from an elegant pursuer of pleasure, became a hard-working, professional man. Both reared in luxury only—both with a youth-seen future of exclusively prosperous anticipation; they are now living a life of simple competence, and doubtless of careful economy; but, how Mrs. Vere looks *now*, and how she bears these reversed anticipations, and accommodates herself to a sphere many might think trying and hard to bear, are points that, we presume, will interest our readers more than any history of a prosperity unbroken. Men's resistance to adversity is positive—a struggle—a contest—and therefore easy. Women's is negative—a simple, inactive endurance—and twenty times as difficult. With this truth in the mind, the view of a condition of fortune, whose reverses are shared equally by a husband and wife, makes the latter's history much the more interesting.

You will not meet, in your daily walk in New York, a more tastefully dressed, lady-like, and elegant woman than Mrs. Vere. Her gait, and general carriage of person, are those of one whose spirit is wholly unsubdued, whose arched foot has a bridge as elastic as in her 'teens; whose lively self-confidence is without a shadow of abatement. In even the beauty of her face, there is no absolute diminution, for the girlish hue of complexion, and the scarce perceptible fullest degree of outline, are more than replaced by heightened expression, and by a shade of *inward* expectation less exacting. Of the world *without*, Mrs. Vere expects as much as ever. Her *unaltered valuation of her own position*, is her beautiful glory—a glory of which she is probably quite unconscious, though it causes her to be looked upon with boundless respect and admiration by any observer who knows the world, and who appreciates the rarity of a pride worn so loftily easy. By it, Mrs. Vere holds her husband's fortunes, in every important particular, where they were. She compels the world, by it, to believe her untouched by any misfortune worth considering; to see her in the same posture and place of society as before, and yield, to her, every inch as much of admiring consideration. Though she dresses with extreme care, and with becoming economy, it is the dress of a woman who is not at all aware of having lost ground by a loss of fortune, and who dresses still for the same position;

and, obediently, society takes her at her word, rates her at her own estimate, and, at this present moment, gives her as much regard, and deference as she could have had with millions, of which to make a display. She walks on her errands, or rides in an omnibus, does any proper thing she likes, without fear of committing her dignity. Her open and frank eye is without suspicion of any possible slight. She is, in short, a woman born with a spirit too high for fortune to affect, and, freed thus from the wear which, most of all, makes inroad upon beauty, she is likely, for twenty years more, to be beautiful and attractive.

Such is Mrs. Vere, and slight observers will not recognise the portrait. Here and there, one who knows her, will.

MISS AYMAR, OF NEW YORK.

By the vote of Underdone-dom, (the stripling constituency of belle-ship in New York,) Miss Aymar would, perhaps, scarce be elected a belle; yet a stranger, accustomed to the society of women of high rank abroad, would recognize in her, at a first glance, a quality of beauty and manners which would have been the pride and admiration of a court. Dignified, without being repulsive—cold, without being reserved—full and perfect in figure and health, yet of marble paleness—frank, yet smiling seldom—a head set very proudly upon the shoulders, yet pliant and natural in all its movements—she is the type of what is meant, abroad, when they say of a woman that she “looks like a duchess.” Add to this, an oval cast of features, a well-completed outline to the cheek, a round, yet tapering chin, and a throat curved gracefully from the head, and there seems nothing wanting, to Miss Aymar, of those peculiarities which, in England, are thought most desirable to grace a title.

In proportion to the nobleness, and fine balance of qualities in a woman, (and this we have admired and wondered at, more than any other peculiarity of the sex), is the unsuspecting readiness of her *assent to destiny*. With all the superiority of Miss Aymar, and the manifest want of a proper response to the call of her mind and heart, she plays her part with unaffected earnestness and contentment, receives what attention falls to her lot with as much pleasure as if any higher intercourse and homage would be beyond her capacity to appreciate, and, (if we may be pardoned the similitude,) simply

does her best, like a blood courser at the plough, without intimating, by discontent or resistance, that her fine nature is out of place and unappreciated. The merest dancing partner, who bespeaks an invitation to her mother's house, by asking her hand for a quadrille, believes any favour there may be in the matter, to be entirely of his own granting—setting down the unvoiced superiority, by which he is mysteriously kept at a distance, as a “something or other about her manner which is not very agreeable.”

Of course there is a “world of one's own,” without which unappreciated poets would come down to what is thought of them, and superior women, by mere lack of recognition, grow like the common-place people among whom they are numbered. Miss Aymar's door shuts in a tranquil universe of thought, of choice books, and of culture which is a luxury without effort; and here the mind, which is bent to the world, daily recovers its stature, and the sympathies, whose noble harmony is diminished to accord with lesser natures, resume their capability and tone. It is by natural and unconscious echo to the chance-sounded key-note of a kindred mind, that the true melody of this inner life is alone betrayed, for it is never ostentatiously sounded to those whom it might disparage or rebuke. Miss Aymar has her appreciators; but, unfortunately, from the very advance of her progress, they are necessarily only those whom she has overtaken—who are not of her own age—who have learned, by disappointment, comparison, and life's varied experiences of bitter and sweet, the true value of what she scarce recognizes in herself. In foreign society, where the men, up to a marriageable age, are kept away from narrowing cares and devoted wholly to such general cultivation as fits them to adorn fortune when they receive it, and fitly to mate the delicacy and dignity of a superior woman when they wed her, she would only have the embarrassment of choice, among competitors for her hand, all suitable in age and accomplishments. Here, such youths are rare; and, as Miss Aymar is not a woman to marry except with the fullest consent of her own taste and feeling, she is (we admiringly fear!) in some danger of never being the wife she could be—the perfect wife made up of contradictions and contrasts—such a one as Shakspeare's Helena promises to be to Bertram:—

“A thousand loves;

A mother and a mistress and a friend;

A phoenix, captain, and an enemy;

A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign;
 A counsellor, a traitress, and a dear;
 His humble ambition, proud humility;
 His jarring concord, and his discord dulcet;
 His faith ; his sweet disaster ; with a world
 Of pretty, fond, adoptious Christendoms
 That blinking Cupid gossips."

FANNY TRELLINGER.

FANNY TRELLINGER is a belle by mistake. She does not understand it herself. And, if continually "trying on" hearts, like shoes, and dropping them with as little ceremony as misfits of morocco, prove a young lady to be a coquette, Fanny Trellinger is a coquette. Yet she does not deserve to be called one.

Miss Trellinger is a blonde, of whom even Buchanan Read, that skilful idealizer of the pencil, could scarce make a beauty. Her eyes, hair, waist, and shoulders might belong to the most neglected of wall-flowers. She dresses well, from obedience to unconscious good taste, but forgets her dress and her looks, from the moment she leaves her mirror, till she comes back to it again. If she has any mere personal charm, it is one which is seldom recognized, except by painters—(though it indicates a delightful quality in a woman, but it can belong to none but the habitually self-forgetful)—her mouth has those *blunt corners* which the tension of a forced smile alters to a sharp angle. Probably no man ever admired Miss Fanny from seeing her, merely. She reaches hearts without paying the toll of beauty for passing in at the eyes. To feel her fascination, one must converse with her ; and the invariable attraction, which affects those who approach her thus near, is as mysterious to most lookers-on, as to a child is the sudden jumping of needles when brought into the neighbourhood of a magnet. It does not seem to require particular qualities to be subject to her influence. All kinds of men, from a Wall Street tetrarch to an unbuttered asparagus in his first tail-coat, find her delightful. She might seem, indeed, indiscriminate in her liking ; for, though her magnetism depends on what is entirely within her own control, she exercises it on every new comer who approaches her—withholding it from none, except those she has rejected or known enough of. Few people in this world being capable (as the doctors say) of "clearly telling what ails them," the secret of this omni-

fascination does not get out, even through the confessions of its victims; and Miss Trellinger shops at Stewart's—of all the belles who go there, the one whose silks and muslins minister to conquests the most unaccountable.

It would be vain to look for the secret of this invisible charm, in the education, or reading, or conversational talent of Miss Fanny. Within the ordinary outline of school-routine, she was left to educate herself; her reading is pursued with no system, and is rather less, than more, than that of other young ladies; and in conversation, she says singularly little. It is doubtful whether her most desperate admirer ever quoted any remark of hers as peculiar or clever; and she never, herself, entertained the remotest idea of expressing a thought so as to make an impression. We seem, thus far, to have almost proved that her fascination is neither of person nor mind; yet it is not so, altogether.

Whether from some bent of the mind early taken, or from an accident of combined mental qualities, it is difficult to say; but Miss Trellinger's most powerful instinct is curiosity as to undisclosed qualities of character. This is united, of course, with a sanguine belief in the superiority of concealed qualities to those upon the surface; and the taste, like that for love and pleasure, seems not to diminish by disappointment. Every man who approaches her as a new acquaintance, is a new enigma of intense interest; and she sets aside his first politenesses, or quietly waits for their exhaustion, and brings him as soon as possible to that state of communicativeness when he will talk freely of himself, and tell his hates and loves, hopes and ambitions. A botanist does not more attentively and patiently take to pieces a complex flower. Her natural tact and ingenuity at inspiring confidence, and provoking the betrayal of secret springs of thought and propensity, are perhaps enough alone to stamp her as a superior girl; and, differently trained, they might have been the basis of a very uncommon character for a woman.

All unconscious that she is doing more than to gratify a simple thirst for the discovery of heroic qualities, dormant and unappreciated, Miss Fanny, meantime, plays a game that no art or fascination could outdo. Forgetful of herself, and perfectly honest in her desire to know deeply the character within, her manifest sincerity puts incredulity at once to sleep! and the self-love of the heart she strives to read, throws down its defences, and believes it has found, at last, the fond inten-

sity with which it sighed to be appreciated! The manner of Miss Trellinger, without being caressing, is that of earnest, exclusive, and grave attention. Her eyes are fastened on the lips of the speaker; the tones in which she gives her assent, or puts her simple and ingenuous, yet most pertinent questions, are subdued to an appealing *contralto* by the interest she really feels; and the expression of her countenance while she listens, says, more earnestly than Coriolanus:—

“Prithee, say on!
The setting of thine eye and cheek proclaim
A matter from thee!”

The love that is incidentally and inevitably made to Miss Fanny, all this time, she receives with the sanguine appreciation, with which she believes in each character while studying it. It is the love of a hero, a poet, a philosopher, a chivalric and high-hearted gentleman—or so she estimates and answers it. Her notion of love is as elevated as her expectation of quality in the man she seeks, and by the dignity and earnestness of her brief responses of tenderness, she really inspires that kind of impassioned respect which is the ground-work of affections the most lasting.

It will be seen that while the temporary intimacies of Miss Trellinger look, to careless observers, like any other of the flirtations going on in society, the unseen weapons with which she achieves her conquests, are more formidable than is suspected. As was remarked before, her victims could not, or would not precisely tell what had attracted and won them; and their perseverance in attention, after being dropped and slighted by her, is even more a subject of bewildered wonder, to her female acquaintances, than the conquest itself. She passes, very naturally, for heartless, capricious and hypocritical—for one who does her utmost to captivate, for the sake of the triumph only. Her acute perceptions are always waiting for her glowing imagination to exhaust itself, however; and a sudden arrival at the termination of a shallow character, or an unconscious disclosure of a quality inconsistent with her ideal, inspires her with a disappointment or disgust proportionate to her expectations, and, it is only by intercourse abruptly ended that she can avoid even a rude expression of her feeling. There is, in the world, unquestionably, such character as Miss Fanny Trellinger seeks with this thirst insatiable. Should she find it, she would “love with a continuance,” there is little doubt; but she may find, that, with

such men, the expectations from the love of woman are large; and she may regret that some of the intensity of her nature had not been expended on that self-culture which alone can satisfy, in the unimpassioned intervals of possessed affection.

MRS. LETTRELL.

THERE is a great deal silently recognized and known in this world, which still seems first discovered when first spoken of. And there is a great deal understood which seems misunderstood; for society very often confidently expresses one opinion of a person, and yet, whenever brought into contact with that same person, acts upon an unexpressed and totally different estimate. The truth is, that most of us are far wiser than our words would prove us to be—the art of *first clothing an idea*, being so different and evasive that few try it at all, and most people so invariably *borrowing* the word-clothes for their opinions, that the true things they *think* are not recognizable in the erroneous things they *say*.

The above truisms would probably occur to any one after reading the sketch I am about to draw; but it would seem at first glance to be something of a riddle, and those who are as little fond of deferred revelations as I, will approve, perhaps, that I have first given the solution.

Leaning, one enchanting summer's morning, two or three years ago, from the upper balcony of a hotel on the road to a watering-place, I chanced to see, spread out upon the railing of the balcony below, a lady's hand. A white cuff, with an inch or two of the sleeve of a mourning dress, was all I could see, besides, of the tranquil owner—tranquil I say, for she sat during the fifteen minutes that she was left alone by her companions, with that outspread hand absolutely motionless, evidently drinking the summer into its pores of pearl with the enjoyment and forgetful luxuriousness of a water-lily newly ungloved. The party, of which the lady was one, had arrived but a few minutes before, and I had not yet seen her face or figure, but I insensibly formed an estimate of her character from a study of her hand only, and had even sketched to myself, though, of course, with a mere chance of correctness, her expression of countenance, features, and form.

The hand is not always a reliable index to the character. It is, more than any other portion of the body, likely to give a deformed betrayal of any peculiar manual labour in those from whom it has descended. A moderate experience in

palmistry will enable one to distinguish a shoemaker's daughter from a tailor's, for instance, the enlargement of one particular muscle or finger by constant effort being handed down like a family feature. Where it is unmodified by any special influence, however, the hand is expressive of the presence, or want, of two or three leading qualities in female character, and gives often a dumb, but lively promise of sweetness else undisclosed.

In the beautiful and motionless one spread out, so unconscious of observation, on the railing below my eye, I read exquisite sensibility to pleasure, joyous love of the beautiful, generous freedom from suspicion, delicacy still unalarmed, frankness, and, if I may so express it, sensuous poetry of nature. It was not a small hand. The dimples were round and scarce perceptible. The upper joints of the long and taper fingers were so full as to give an exquisite expression of dreamy and idle tenderness, while at the same time there was a look of the finest dexterity and nicest elegance in the slender and rosy nails. The whole posture and form of the hand showed a habit of unreluctant and obedient expansion to impulse, and it looked as unwithdrawing and trustful as the opening petals of a rose.

I had thus far studied the viewlessly written page of character, accidentally opened in its dewy fairness to my perusal, when I was accosted by an acquaintance, who chanced to be one of the lady's party. He told me who it was that was sitting in the balcony below, and, to a question or two of my own, gave me her character—as that of a lady who disliked society, was very strict in the education of her children, highly religious, devoted to the poor, *and* passionately fond of riding on horseback. I tacitly made use of my own better reading to separate what was probably true, from what I knew to be erroneous, in this hearsay estimate of character, but stored away a resolution to know more of the owner of that hand, whom I had met and was likely to meet again, but who had hitherto passed, gloved and unobserved, in the dazzle of more pretentious society.

So easily do we let a superficial impression guide us, in our selection of persons to observe and admire, that, (but for the chance revealing by that expressive hand,) I might very possibly, have continued, even till now, to meet, without recognition of its veiled brightness, this one of the cluster of better spirits, moving, like electric sparks, through the dull metal of

every human society. Mrs. Lettrell is beautiful, certainly, but it is beauty of that kind which dissolves film after film from off your eye as you grow interested in gazing on it! and, much admiration as she attracts from trifling observers, a man of sense would be very likely to take this common attraction to express her whole value, and not give her the after study which would disclose to him the finer quality of the nature, admired thus partially yet instinctively.

To anticipate once more. Nature seems to have completed the character of Mrs. Lettrell, and forgetfully, afterwards, to have relit its cup of perfect mixture, and added to it an unneeded drop of conscientiousness. To this double portion of the corrective ingredient, the joyous and life-teeming impulses of a heart, whose self-abandonment would be as safe as a fount's to its overflow, are perpetually in check. No thrill of pleasure goes through her heart unchallenged; no intention, save one of duty, escapes being called to order; no glow of impassioned worship of the beautiful kindles in her bosom unrebuked. Like an ingredient added too late for solution, however, this last superfluous drop has not tintured, though it mingles with, the other qualities; and often, in repose, separates quite, and leaves her else perfect and impulsive nature, all transparent. To this release she yields with the feeling of escape from school—when on horseback, or when the enchantments of summer, or moonlight, poetry, or music, take her by surprise—though for every such indulgence she calls herself to account, and balances it by a self-imposed penance of distasteful duty.

Forced into gay society by relatives and unavoidable influences, Mrs. Lettrell constantly and sincerely expresses her unwillingness to be there, dresses pertinaciously in a way to disguise whatever beauty she has that might seem to invite admiration, and perpetually checks her own joyousness, and the careless conversation of others, to suggest graver topics or make interest for a benevolent object. The *talk* of society takes her at her own valuation, and no one will express an opinion of her except as an over-exemplary woman, who would not have been handsome if she could have helped it—but around her, notwithstanding, cluster the life-loving, the youthful and the impulsive, and, though none would allow that she was not “too good for this world,” the most avowed mirth-hunter feels uncondemned by her presence.

To those grasping monopolists, (of whom there is here and

there one!) who would possess that entire world, a woman's heart, as unshared as Eden when Adam first looked around him alone, this composition of character—like a summer's day, with a lock and key to it—is the treasure that rewards any cost of search, even without beauty; but, coupled with beauty, of priceless rarity and value.

I break off abruptly and unwillingly, leaving a singular and beautiful character drawn only in outline; but to say more would be an invasion of propriety, and perhaps, too, they who are capable of best appreciating it, will be able to supply what is left unpencilled. In great danger of giving offence, even as it is, I have abstained from sketching form or features, describing only the fair hand which so truly first revealed the character to my own knowledge, and which few, whose recognition will be troublesome, will ever chance to see ungloried.

HOPE CHASMAR.

IN every block of marble there is a concealed statue. And this assertion, so susceptible of qualification, probably corresponds in truth and definiteness, to the optimistic axiom, that "there is a beautiful ideal in the character of every human being"—wanting only development. I have known some men—(and I presume, *therefore*, that there may be here and there a woman)—whom no chiselling or developing, by human art or circumstances, could possibly make interesting or admirable.

Incredulity, however, would as wrongfully lead to the other extreme. In more of the people about us than we should think possible, there are capabilities of the higher displays of character, wanting only favourable culture and opportunity. Among women more particularly, whose bud and flower of youth are left to grow more spontaneously than those of men—less crowded by care and less rudely handled by vice and antagonism—the inherent qualities of mind, ready to bloom, and bear fruit luxuriantly, with but a little pruning and transplanting, are often beautifully visible. To a philosophic observer, the discovery and appreciation of these uncommon capabilities, in those who pass for but ordinary persons, gives to society the additional interest which a botanist feels in walking over a common field—seeing curious plants, and flowers of divine purpose and structure, on ground which another man walks over without thought or interest.

The writers of romance have found it so much easier to make heroines out of "dark eyes" and "raven locks," than

out of blue eyes and fair hair, that a light complexion has, by dint of the mere repetition of this trick of authorship, grown to be considered a natural sign of "nothing remarkable." Almost any one, sent into a ball-room to select, from a hundred young ladies, the one most capable of an heroic action, would first reject all who had blue eyes and fair hair—taking it as a matter of course that the pick must be from the dark-eyed only. And this would be very likely to be a mistake; for the sanguineous temperaments of light-complexioned people are both more hopeful and more enthusiastic, and these are two essential ingredients of the heroic, which, as mere matters of temperament, may be possessed without affecting the comparison in other qualities.

Hope Chasmar is not beautiful enough, nor is her family wealthy enough, to account for all the attention she receives. Her light hair is magnificently abundant, it is true, and her head is moulded in those admirable proportions which attract a sculptor's eye; but neither of these are beauties definitively recognized by the class of beaux who find her attractive. She has the two peculiarities which belong to all people capable of great enthusiasm, an expansive chest and thin nostrils, and she has one other personal mark inseparable from lofty character—*motion without angles or pettiness*—so that, whether she lifts a hand or turns her head, it expresses amplitude of feeling, and freedom from suspicious reserves. Her features, as a whole, inspire confidence and liking, while, in detail, they are neither very regular nor very decided.

A bird singing his song on a bough, however, and the same bird, with his wings spread for flight, and glittering in the sunflecks as he sweeps through a wood, is not more different than the countenance of Hope Chasmar habitually, and the same face at transient and fitful moments of startled imagination. Without the conscious but undefined orbit of nobler action for which her soul is instinctively aiming its impulses, she would not, perhaps, have that generous self-forgetfulness and unrebuking nobleness of demeanour, which make her attractive to ordinary men; so that she owes, indirectly, to her heroic character, the common and unappreciative homage which makes her a belle; but her true beauty has probably never been seen by one in twenty of her admirers, or, if seen, has passed for an accidental expression of face, which might as easily have been awakened by the same chance light upon any other. In her ordinary mood she seems simply good-looking,

lady-like, hearty, joyous and unsuspecting. In her rarer and finer moments, her whole countenance awakens, her nostrils and eyelids slightly expand, her neck lifts from its forward curve, and bears her fine head with the fearless pose of Minerva's, and the muscles of her face, which seem to have been as much out of place, for effect, as busts, taken down from their pedestals, assume a totally different proportion, and make a totally different impression, on the observer's eye. The most effective change, however, is that of the lips, the genial expansion, which widens the mouth to a disadvantageous straightness of line with its look of good humour, yielding to a relaxation of repose, by which the corners fall, and the "Cupid's bow" of the upper lip becomes perfect, the lower lip, by the same movement, arching into fulness and firmness. In a year or two's observation of this young lady, I have noticed this change of expression, perhaps four or five times; but, at the late Opera ball, I chanced to see her look suddenly over her shoulder at an exciting change in the music, and I should suppose that the look I then saw awakened, would have revealed to any observer that there stood a heroine capable of life's greatest emergencies.

JENNY EVELAND.

"A MAN who loses his sight," says Dugald Stewart, "improves the sensibility of his touch: but who would consent, for such a recompense, to part with the pleasures which he receives from the eye?" The expense at which most kinds of distinction are acquired, seems expressed in this. The right arm of the sculptor has twice the muscular development of the left, exercised as it alone is, with the constant lift of the leaden hammer which drives his chisel. But, inseparable as is this enlargement of the thought-conveying portion of the body (and of a corresponding portion of the brain) from the specific labour and construction which can alone bring fame to the worker in marble, it is, no less, an *unequal development* of the system, and, just so far, a lessening of its perfection. The Apollo Belvidere is a perfect type of a man's figure and limbs, in healthful development; but he never could have excelled, as a human sculptor, without a special exercise of brain and muscle, which would have enlarged them at the expense of equal distribution of forces, and so destroyed him as a model, either of perfect health or perfect beauty. While the possession of genius, therefore, may be consistent with entire harmony of propor-

tion, the development of it, or the labour of concentrating it upon any special pursuit to create a fame, enlarges the exclusively-exerted portions of the system, and destroys its healthful balance.

In the difference between a mean indolence, and the lofty resistance of nature to this partial development, which is demanded of genius—in the perpetual struggle between an instinct to exert *all* the faculties equally, and an ambition for the distinction which is only attainable by exclusive exercise of *one*—lies the “motive power” of the character of Jenny Eveland. It was only by prefacing a sketch of her with the foregoing somewhat abstract explanation, that her apparent uncertainty, and variableness of aim and effort, could be justly drawn.

Miss Eveland has superiority distributed throughout her nature. Her face has been too long subject to strong emotions to be invariably attractive. At times it would be called plain. It is capable, however, of most illuminated beauty, and it is always expressive, always frank and noble; with the irregular features which are necessary to the highest expression, her form, in all else, is the perfection of feminine symmetry. Never giving her movements a thought, she walks with a lithe grace and freedom that betrays her at once, to the observing, as a woman of perfect make. Her head is admirably set on. An Indian girl, bred in the forest like a fawn, would not be more erect, nor of more unconscious elasticity of carriage and mien. An unusually arched instep to an exquisite foot, gives her the mark of high breeding, which is most looked to in the East, and her slender, and yet roundly beautiful hand, with its tapering fingers, has a look of discriminating elegance that the most careless of her friends recognize and admire. A bright hazel eye, earnest and fearless; profuse brown hair, whose natural waves are controlled with difficulty by her comb, bright teeth, and one of those voices of “clouded contralto” which betray the tearfulness of a throat used to keeping down sadness, are other peculiarities, which go to form her portrait, and which share in the delightful impression she makes on all who have the happiness to know her.

But, though the mind of Jenny Eveland is gifted as symmetrically as her person—(perhaps *because* it is)—she has no believers in her genius, except those who can recognize it without the evidence of its works—as some book it has

Yet, from the curse of industry—from the “sweat of the brow,”—no humanity is exempt, and ambition, which is the shape under which it compels proud minds to action, makes the large endowments of Jenny Eveland gifts of uneasy possession. It is not enough for her that she has glorious imaginings—that she can exchange the passwords of inspiration with poets and painters—that she can go abroad from common thoughts, as the dove from the ark, and return with tidings of what could be found with such wings only. The fever to prove this superiority to the world, burns constantly within her. She would fain apply her seal to the impressive events and opinions of the time. Love, that would only call upon her affections, and that would leave unemployed her finest powers, could not content her. Fame, on the other hand, if it gave her no scope for the boundless tenderness of her heart, would suffice as poorly. She is too gifted for common love—she is too fond and sympathetic to breathe only the thin atmosphere of the gifted. And, in this embarrassment of a *nature too proportionate for a world* which “the curse” has made one of *unequal development*, the youth of Jenny Eveland is passing unsatisfied away.

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